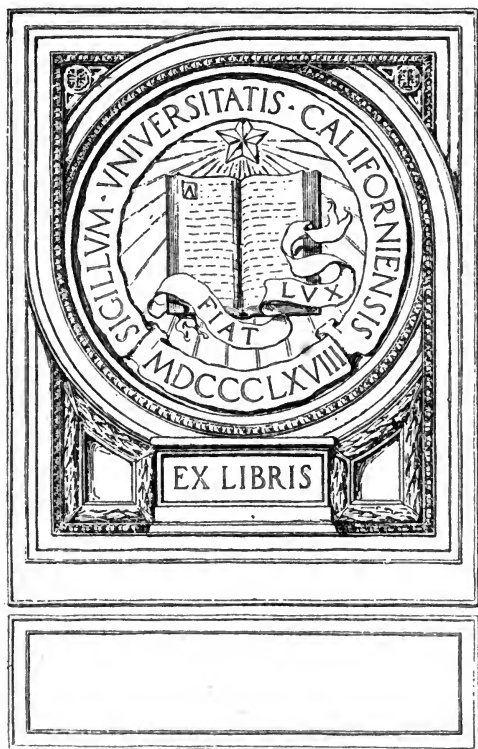


**A BELGIAN MISSION**  
**TO THE BOERS . . .**

**EUGENE STANDAERT**

GIFT OF  
The Consulate of Belgium





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A BELGIAN MISSION  
TO THE BOERS



# A BELGIAN MISSION TO THE BOERS

BY

EUGÈNE STANDAERT

DÉPUTÉ OF BRUGES; PRESIDENT OF THE  
ORDER OF ADVOCATES

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

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Asst.  
Consulate of Belgium

7. 1900  
ALBANY

OK.

TO MY  
FOURTEEN NEPHEWS  
OF WHOM TEN ARE AT THE FRONT IN THE  
BELGIAN ARMY, AND FOUR, NOT CALLED  
UPON FOR MILITARY SERVICE, ARE WORK-  
ING IN MUNITION FACTORIES IN ENGLAND

370625



## PREFACE

THE lapse of time will reveal more clearly, in all its greatness, the part played by Belgium in the World War.

The glorious part played by the King draws to itself the admiration of the world by its beauty of action and simple valour ; and assures, by its quiet majesty, the permanence of *regnant* Belgium.

The heroic struggles of our dear, valiant soldiers, of *militant* Belgium, from Liège to the Yser, repeat, in the pages of history, the epic combat of David against Goliath.

The high-spirited attitude of *suffering* Belgium, indomitable beneath the German jack-boot, justifies the bold words of the Chief Minister of Broqueville at the outset of the invasion : " Vanquished, perhaps ; subdued—never ! " Cardinal Mercier and Burgomaster Max will ever remain typical examples of civic courage.

The sublime and modest dignity of *homeless* Belgium, stimulates everywhere prodigies of generosity and a better comprehension—in England above all—of German culture and atrocity. Legions of Belgian refugees have given their sons as precious recruits to the army, and to munition factories,—a crowd of improvised workers, all the more eager to labour because their *bourgeois* hands were unskilled.

A *rôle* also of the first importance is that of the Belgian Missions to foreign parts—to America, Canada, Roumania, Italy, Spain, Africa—whose efforts have contributed so successfully to focusing on Belgium the increasing generosity of governments and of peoples, and world-wide sympathy for the cause of the Allies.

Charged by my Government with an official mission in the South African Union, I have collected day by day notes and impressions written for myself and my friends. I now give them publicity, as I wish to contribute, if only in a modest way, to the fine total of "Heroic Belgium's" acts and achievements. From the land of the Boers came to us the first decisive victory, and the loss by Germany of a great Colonial Empire. From the land of the Boers—who would have believed it?

I have lived in close touch with what happened during the stirring and anxious hours that preceded this triumph. Events decreed that the Belgian Mission should play a fitting part therein.

Whilst discretion demands much reserve, these pages will tell enough to indicate the painful and tragic changes of fortune through which General Botha brought his victorious and valiant army. They will also tell how the Boer people, for a time misled by the Germans, learned to see their initial error and give their sympathy to Belgium—a little late perhaps, though this fact made it only the more deliberate, generous and loyal.



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# A BELGIAN MISSION TO THE LAND OF THE BOERS

## CHAPTER I

ON July 29, 1914, His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin received from the Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg the following declaration: "If England remains neutral in the impending war, Germany will not seek for any territorial acquisition at the expense of France." "Will the French colonies also be respected?" asked the English Ambassador. "With regard to the colonies," replied the Chancellor, "I cannot make the same promise." This terse and clear statement of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg was like tearing away a veil and leaving the Germanic idea in all its nakedness—to let loose a European war in order to realize the determined aspirations of Germany for a vast Colonial Empire.

How different this from the policy of Bismarck, who held that all the colonies of the world were not worth as much as the little finger of a Pomeranian grenadier.

William II had proudly based his policy, his peculiar policy, the Weltpolitik, that extravagant

idea which, in a celebrated speech at Aix-la-Chapelle, he summed up in these words: "German genius must aspire to the empire of the world."

Did not the Kaiser still more shamelessly reveal the dream of his life when, during the *fêtes* held in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, he exclaimed, to the assembled representatives of the Empire: "We fight for a greater Germany—*dieses grossere Deutsche Reich*. Some day the *Civis Romanus sum* must be replaced by *Ich bin ein deutscher Burger*."

What a quintessence of conceit lurked in the words! *Civis Romanus sum* recalls the grandeur of Rome at the time when Cæsar, after conquering Gaul and the world, summed up the success of his arms in the famous formula, *Veni, vidi, vici*. *Civis Romanus sum* brings back to us the Rome of Augustus, covering Europe from Spain to the Danube, and the Atlas regions, Numidia, Asia and Africa—the most formidable empire the world has ever known. And when the Kaiser, addressing his people, proclaimed that in the twentieth century *Civis Romanus sum* must be replaced by *Ich bin ein deutscher Burger*, one understands all the mad ambition in that brain, all the menace in that dream of subduing Europe and bringing an immense colonial empire beneath German domination. "The place in the sun" William II and his followers wish to be coextensive with the whole world.

Did Bismarck foresee the important part that Germany might play by limiting her ambition to the peaceful conquest of the world's markets only on the battlefield of economic strife? Was he aware of the plain inferiority of the colonizing capacity of

the Germans? Whether the one or the other of these two hypotheses, or both, be correct, history will hold that Bismarck's masterful mind would have saved the great empire built by his hands from the historic error which will end in the humiliation of Germany.

Germany fights—we have just underlined her avowal of it—to fulfil the ambition of her Welt-politik. And now, at a time when the fortune of arms is still undecided in Europe, the German colonial empire breaks down. Its possessions in Asia are no more than a memory. Its important archipelagoes, the islands pompously baptized “New Pomerania,” “New Mecklenburg,” “New Hanover,” “Bismarck Archipelago” have been for some months in the hands of the Allies; Cameroon has suffered the same fate; and the great German colony of South-East Africa has become Bothaland.

Towards Africa, above all, Germany looked with covetous eyes in spite of Bismarck's saying, “We must leave the sand of Africa for the Gallic cock to scratch in.”

When one examines the map of South Africa one sees plainly the tentacles of the Teutonic octopus stretching out to envelop the great British Colony of the South African Union. One sees the latter squeezed between the German colonies of South-West and East Africa, which are like the two arms of a pincers, of which Cameroon, a little further to the north, is the fulcrum. It is in South-West Africa that one may see the German colonial system in detail; that colony was vigorously organized and ruled with implacable harshness. The indigenous

population of the Herreros, drowned in a river of blood, was almost entirely exterminated; the poor natives were condemned to death by the mere fact of their ancestral territory becoming a German colony. Desirous of making everything proceed in accordance with their own methods, the Germans utterly estranged the Bantus—excellent agriculturists, renowned for their gentle and pastoral ways. One day some Hottentots, employed in the construction of a railway, on demanding better food, were answered by gun-shots. The result was that in a short time all the indigenous races of South-West Africa conceived a horror of “Kultur,” which, from the colonization point of view, was a complete failure.

Elsewhere, the economic equipment of the colony was followed up methodically, and in a few years £140,000,000 had been expended on it. When Herr Dernburg was Colonial Minister at Berlin they constructed the costly railway across the sandy deserts towards the Cape frontier, a line of a purely strategic character, the terminus of which did not link up with a single line of communication. The same policy was always pursued in regard to railways. Insufficient notice was taken of it, otherwise the plans of conquest of the German staff must have been revealed in detail.

It has been the custom to under-rate the importance of German South-West Africa. This is a mistake. The Boer Generals, Botha and Smuts, ever since the beginning of their campaign, have hinted at a future of unsuspected promise. We will quote a notice which says: “In 1909, the first year of the regular working, the diamond fields



yielded an output of twenty-five millions. The diamonds are generally smaller than those of the Cape, but are of a finer water, and their remarkable transparency is greatly valued." It is not necessary to add more to show the great intrinsic value that Germany attaches to the south-west African colony.

But it is towards the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and the Cape, that the eyes of the paladins of greater Germany, *dieses grossere Deutsche Reich*, are directed : it is there especially that the approach-works of the dreamed-of empire are being prepared. In poetical terms the colonial Teutons used to speak of South Africa : "We must have an African empire finer than the Indies, in which there lives an energetic and superb race, the type of which recalls Rubens, Teniers, Ostade, Van Eyck : a population of Afrikaners which from the Atlantic to Rhodesia will form with the Germans one single people, united in mutual and fruitful sympathy."

Such was the dream ; for fifteen years Germany has applied herself ceaselessly to its realization. Touching, as she does, the Transvaal and Orange Free State, she has not neglected any schemes to attain her end. Faithful to her methodic traditions of invasion, she has proceeded along the lines of a slow infiltration of Germans immigrating right to the Transvaal, and there installing villages, schools, clubs and churches, in the full light of Britannic liberty. No one imagined how far the German reptile had carried out his underground and underhand work in South Africa. It was only when the European war broke out that one suddenly realized

the duplicity and cheating, the sapping and mining accomplished by Germany in the land of the kopjes.

An empire finer than the Indies ! What a dream ! And, indeed, when one has travelled from one end to the other of the immense territory of the South African Union one can understand how this choice morsel has tempted the huge appetite of the Teutons. With its six million inhabitants, twelve hundred thousand of whom are white, the South African Union, with its huge wealth and incalculable possibilities, is colonial territory *par excellence*.

In spite of the somewhat indolent nature of the farmers and breeders, notwithstanding the immense tracts of land awaiting the occupier, agriculture produces astonishing results. In a single year—1912—the country people reaped maize to the value of about four hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling ; the ostrich breeders sold their precious feathers for three million pounds, and the sheep farmers their wool for six million pounds.

The mining resources of the Transvaal are, it is said, of unparalleled richness. Gold is extracted worth about forty million pounds a year, *i.e.* forty per cent. of the total production of the whole world ; whilst diamonds yield twelve millions, and coal one and a half million pounds sterling annually.

The English colony of the South African Union comprises four states, called provinces : the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and the Transvaal—these two last provinces being the old Republics, independent vassals of England since the famous Boer War, which terminated in 1902, by the treaty concluded at Pretoria between Lord Kitchener and General Botha. That war lasted three years. It

was on October 10, 1899, that the Secretary of State, Mr. Reitz, the first Boer we saw in Africa,—for it was he who came on board our steamer to bid us welcome,—signified the ultimatum to England, in stirring terms, ending thus: “We will stand shoulder to shoulder to face the enemy, and we will stagger humanity.”

They did in truth astonish the world! I do not intend to discuss here the Anglo-Boer War; it was fully criticized even in England, where the Liberal party evoked the shade of Gladstone, the friend of peace, the champion of nationalities. I remember the exclamation of an English statesman, a colonial of mark: “You doubtless do not imagine that if we could have our time over again, we should go to war with the Boers.” What homage to that epic people which for three years held in check the united forces of Great Britain, and laid down their arms only when England had promised to respect the Boer language and grant all the privileges of autonomy in home affairs.

In fifteen years the colonizing genius of England has been able to work wonders in the heart of a population as proud as it is indomitable. Where all others, no doubt, would have failed, Great Britain doubled the Stormy Cape, not without perils and shocks, but with a degree of success that has caused universal surprise. This is because British imperialism understands so well how to respect the national aspirations of its dominions, leaving each people free and independent to manage its internal affairs, its economic interests, even its armed forces. This is so true that the following striking declaration has been made: “England sees her flag float over

the fifth part of the terrestrial globe, and yet has an army no larger than that of Switzerland!" It would have sufficed for Canada, the Indies, New Zealand and the South African Union to say: "We remain at home and take no direct interest in the European war," and England, alone, would have been obliged to face with her resources the formidable conflict in which she is now engaged. All the colonies, however, spontaneously rallied round the mother country, thus giving the lie to the Teutonic sarcasms which ridiculed Britannic imperialism as being a "sham imperialism, without either cohesion or strength, destined to fall to pieces at the first rude shock."

What a miscalculation by German imperialism, which, unlike the other, has militarism as its basis, and for its end the absorption of nationalities by that awful thing, German culture! A colossus with feet of clay, said the Germans, when speaking of England. If such a thing exists in Europe, it is not to be found on a certain island!

The Germanic dream of an African Empire, as fine as that of the Indies, has vanished for ever; not only has the South African Union spurned the advances of Germany, but it has declared war against her, achieving in a few months the conquest of South-West Africa. At the present time the German Empire is in the position of having been despoiled of nearly 400,000 square miles, that is to say, more than two-thirds of its over-seas possessions.

This is the first stage in her punishment.

## CHAPTER II

THE Belgian Government having been warned by its consular representatives, as well as by the English Government, of German intrigues in Africa, it was decided in October 1914 to send an official mission to the country of the Boers.

Numerous German agents were spreading the most outrageous calumnies throughout the Transvaal and Orange Free State, saying that Belgium had broken the treaty of neutrality in making herself the vanguard of the French and attacking Germany, the latter thus being obliged to defend herself—that the Belgians were a disgrace to civilized Europe, even the women committing the most horrible atrocities on wounded prisoners.

The object of that campaign is obvious enough. In Boer hearts there exists racial sympathy with the Flemish people, which it was necessary to suppress by rendering that people detestable and representing the war of the colossus and the dwarf as the inevitable consequence of “an odious and stupid provocation.” On the same grounds the intervention of England in favour of Belgium was unjustifiable, and the difficulties in which the mother country was placed afforded the Boers a unique chance of regaining their independence by a general rising.

Thus the weapon of slander that the Germans wielded with natural ease did its work in Africa, as well as in Italy, Switzerland, Roumania, Spain and America.

The Government did not hesitate; they agreed to entrust to my excellent colleague, Dr. Van der Perre of the Chamber of Representatives, and to myself, the highly honourable mission of vindicating the name and honour of Belgium among the Boers. Neither the risks of the voyage, nor the delicate and hazardous side of the mission were concealed from us, any more than the probable fatigues of a hurried journey across a torrid country, necessarily undertaken in the height of summer, as circumstances did not permit us to wait for a more favourable season. We were required to go and defend with words our attacked country, and it was not for us to hesitate.

At the moment of leaving London for the place of embarkation, I received a very clear impression of the importance attached in high quarters to our mission. On the platform of Victoria Station were assembled the Right Hon. W. P. Schreiner, formerly Prime Minister at the Cape, now High Commissioner of the South African Union, the Chief of the Colonial Office in London, and several noted functionaries of Downing Street, who had very cordially come to press our hands and wish us *Bon voyage*.

*Bon voyage!* There was a touch of emotion in this wish, depriving it of its conventional banality; the words suggested certain phantom vessels, bearing the names of *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, *Dresden*, *Karlsruhe*, *Königsberg*—those corsairs of the high seas

which, since the beginning of hostilities and within a period of twelve weeks, sank fifty-two merchant ships in mid-ocean.

Slowly, under the care of a pilot, the *Briton*—an Atlantic liner that for twenty-one days became our floating home—leaves the Thames and passes through the Straits of Dover; to right and left are mine-sweepers, those humble but courageous workers that hunt for floating mines, the barbarous engines released by the Germans in despite of the most distinct conventions. Conventions!—how absurd this word seems now. Germany *signed* a triple engagement “never to make use of unmoored mines unless constructed in such a manner as to become harmless an hour at the longest after those laying them shall have lost control over them.” Contracts signed by Germany are mere scraps of paper.

And the jurist, having that brutal disregard of treaties plainly in view, the jurist who has given his life to the legal defence of what is after all the touchstone of civilization—the sanctity of contracts—comprehends it better than other people, and feels keenly with what a disquieting future we are threatened by this crime of Germany against the bases of law and civilization.

The Straits of Dover present a scene of intense, though rather troubled and uneasy, animation. Swift destroyers watch over and protect navigation; an aeroplane hovers above us like a gull; a continuous coming and going of boats and ships enlivens the grey, cold seascape.

In passing we salute the flags of Spain, Holland,

Norway and America, and are aware how strict a watch is being kept over the free passage of the world's commerce across the sea approach to Dover. At the entrance to the Channel we drop the pilot and are on the open sea.

My readers may not be like me ; but I adore the sea, and know nothing of sea-sickness. Nothing to me is so delightful as life on board ship, the reposeful, invigorating days in mid-ocean ; even a short spell of rough weather is not amiss.

In the offing of the Bay of Biscay the sea became dark, the colour of ink beneath a leaden sky. The *Briton* began to roll a bit ; passengers had to cling to doorways, partitions, stair-rails, and many retired to their cabins. Very soon things began rolling about the vessel ; a storm was brewing. For a long time I remained on deck watching the stirring sight of the raging billows. Waves high as the foresail mast would hurl themselves on deck with such violence that it appeared as though they must inevitably sweep away and engulf everything. Every time the *Briton*, nimble as a deer and keen as a steel blade, cut through the enormous mass that dispersed itself in a deafening crash. Sometimes a monster wave, rising to an amazing height, advanced like a massive block as if to swallow us up ; but the *Briton*, always sure of her strength, struck her bows into the monster, which for a moment would hold the vessel like a bull shaking its victim on its horns. In vain, however : the steel passed through it, jets of foam flew in all directions, white froth like the slaver of some vanquished monster. At such times the entire vessel was shaken violently ; it seemed to quiver beneath



the strain ; her plates creaked and her frames trembled. It was grand indeed, and the *Briton* won a glorious victory in this formidable and dramatic struggle. After four days of a rough, angry sea there came a sudden change. We bade adieu to a chilly grey autumn, to overcoats, furs and plaids ; the air grew warm, the breeze gentle, the passengers began to smile, and many of them, hitherto unseen, emerged from the ship's interior like bees in spring-time.

We reached Madeira. Ranged in a semicircle were the deliciously green mountains, dotted with innumerable white villas like daisies in a meadow : thus the Bay of Funchal presented itself in the dazzling enchantment of its eternal setting, the gold of the sun and the blue of the sky. It was winter at Madeira, but that was evident only in the old plane trees with their speckled bark skirting the shore, and shedding their crimson leaves on the ground. A warm sun enveloped us, soft and caressing. We went up to the fragrant gardens under the palms, the senses expanding to an indescribable sweetness. All around were rosebuds, brilliant camellias (white and red), geraniums, yellow irises spotted with violet, fluxia with its purple bells, white lilies, creamy jessamine, vines laden with grapes, bulging melons, brilliant and golden. The villas rose white under the shade of the black parasol pines in a frame of giant date palms and elegant banana trees. The children of Madeira, artless creatures, with caressing glances and nut-brown skins, are in the habit of throwing flowers to travellers as they pass, a gracious rain of multi-

coloured sweet-smelling blossoms, and for an hour in this dream island a foreigner may fancy himself like the hero of a legend. The goddess of flowers offers herself to him in the satin of the petals, and the intoxication of perfumes. We climbed the last slopes, and at the highest point of the road the scene was astonishingly transformed. By a strange optical illusion, a kind of mirage, the ocean, with its changing gleams, seemed to rise towards the zenith and stand up vertically like a wall; while the heights we had just ascended sloped down abruptly to the bottom, where the *Briton* lay anchored between an emerald mountain—Funchal—and an azure mountain flecked with mother-o'-pearl—the sea.

After breakfast—an excellent meal which was like a dainty feast after the rather monotonous course of English cookery on board the steamer—we descended in sledges, little vehicles with seats for two, flanked by guides posted on the back runners. Down rocky slopes, along which we slid in lively fashion, it was an amazing plunge into a luxuriant country where the vegetation of the north was strangely mingled with that of the south.

This toboggan route under a cradle of palms, through fir groves bordered with aloes and innumerable flowers, with occasional clear glimpses of Funchal and the ocean, was like a fairy dream. We met some erect, graceful women skilfully bearing on their heads pitchers full of water, and the movements of the black-eyed girls made them look charmingly picturesque in their dull lilac gowns with white bodices, in which was always placed a red camellia.

There followed for us a spacious life, without other horizon than the indefinite circle of which the ship remained the centre. At night we travelled with all lights extinguished, and this threw a shade of unrest over the voyage. During the day every time a distant trail of smoke betrayed a ship there was increasing anxiety amongst the ladies. All precautions were taken; the *Briton* deviated from her usual course, and when evening drew in every regulation was strictly observed. Frequently a bugle would call the crew to fire-drill; passengers summoned from the saloon received necessary instructions in case of a *sauve qui peut*; life-belts and buoys distributed everywhere. Caution was such that the names of the Belgian delegates were omitted from the passenger list printed on board and in London, the censor having forbidden the departure of the mission being announced in the Press.

But human nature is so constituted that people accustom themselves to everything, even to danger. After a few days the ladies became less anxious and more sociable, and when, at night, in the dim glimmer of the night-lights, they left the saloon to go to their berths, they no longer trembled all over as during the first few days—like bathers when they wish to plunge into the sea and know that it is cold. It was with smiling self-possession that, in view of possible contingencies, we spread out the life-saving apparatus every night close to our beds.

Among the passengers on board the *Briton* was an American Protestant Bishop, a friend of President Wilson; he was the most important personage from our point of view, and it seemed as if even before

landing in Africa our mission had begun. American opinion about the Belgians and the part played by them in the war now ravaging Europe was revealed to us forthwith. As regards the atrocities, they are not believed in, or only partially; all wars involve inevitable horrors; moreover, when *franc-tireur* warfare is engaged in, reprisals are sure to occur.

How about the question of right and wrong? We were considered to be in the wrong. Neutrality did not oblige us to attempt the impossible, that is to say, the resistance of a dwarf to a colossus. It seemed, moreover, that, by her clearly anglophile policy, Belgium had violated her neutrality of her own accord, just as she had perverted its true character by the annexation of the Congo.

It was plain that the Germans in America had worked their propaganda well. It was necessary for us, every day, morning and evening, to explain and discuss the Belgian point of view. The reading of the principal extracts from the inquiry into the atrocities committed by the Germans made a great impression. The pretended alliance of Germany with England—that stupid German invention founded on the remarks of Colonel Barnardiston, who admitted that he had no special powers—we were able to reduce to nothing, thanks to the documents supplied by the Belgian Government. It was possible for us to prove, text in hand, that there had never been any Anglo-Belgian convention, and that the declarations relative to the landing of an English army in Belgium had in view one single assumption—that Germany should *first invade Belgium*. Moreover, had not the German Chancellor declared in the Reichstag at Berlin, on August 4, 1914: “Necessity

makes law; our troops have occupied Belgium *contrary to the right of nations*; it is not possible for us to listen to *the just protests* of the Belgians. *The injustice committed will be repaired* as soon as it can be done"? This language of the Chancellor would have had no meaning if Belgium had not had her neutrality violated. As for the annexation of the Congo, Germany was the first to recognize it without protest or reserve; and some months after the annexation, *i.e.* on April 29, 1913, the present Secretary of State, von Jagow, declared at the Reichstag: "The neutrality of Belgium is determined by international conventions, and Germany has decided to respect those conventions." It was necessary for us to gain ground step by step, and to discuss at length the question of right, when we drove the Bishop into a corner over the subject of the "scrap of paper," which is a very boundary line between civilization and barbarism. By degrees we saw the real mind of this intellectual man right itself from error and turn towards justice; gradually the obstinacy of indifference gave way to an effusion of real sympathy. It may be imagined how deeply we felt the justice of our cause, when one day the Bishop sent for us into the saloon, and read to us a long letter he had written to President Wilson, in which, after having recorded the true facts about the atrocities committed by the Germans, he begged the President, in the name of every law of humanity, to take in hand the cause of martyred Belgium.

The following Sunday, at the service presided over by the captain, whose harsh voice, made for command, softened wonderfully in the solemn invocations of prayer, the Bishop preached from the text

*et exaltavit humiles.* He denounced pride, the curse of nations as of men, which throughout the ages has caused rivers of blood to flow ; pride, for which God inflicts the chastisement of bringing those who idolize themselves to the level of the barbarian and the brute. And he concluded with : "From cataclysms arise regenerations. I greet the Europe of to-morrow : a renewed Germany, great still, but cured for ever of her errors of militarism and follies of pride ; a strengthened France, walking in a new halo of tolerance and beautiful latinity towards her destined riches ; a little Belgium, grown greater by misfortune, led to a glorious future by a King who has shown the world what is the majesty of right."

At the end of the service an Englishman whispered in my ear, "You have not wasted your time."

It was ideally calm ; the vessel swayed in a slow rolling motion that was almost tedious, like the swing of a pendulum ; all the passengers were out, stretched upon deck chairs. On the horizon, like an apparition upon the water, we saw the peak of Teneriffe, rising abruptly from the sea to an altitude of twelve thousand feet in the form of a perfect cone, with faultless point, the mass, ever tapering as it rose, seeming to rear its bold snow-topped crest up to heaven. This classic, isolated mountain, perfect in shape, majestic, elegant, rejoiced the sight and warmed the imagination. At moments the peak appeared idealized ; some light milky clouds floated about the base, the enormous mass seemed to detach itself from the land, the white of its snow became silver, the brown of its stone vermilion ; a luminous and delicate irradiation

escaped from its surface. The beautiful peak of Teneriffe hovered in space, a halo round it, as if about to fly upwards to a sky of azure, sunshine and dreams.

There was excitement on board the *Briton*; a marconigram from Dakar announced that three great German cruisers, the *Gneisenau*, *Scharnhorst*, and *Leipzig*, had been sunk by the English fleet, and the *Königsberg* driven to the African coast, while the *Dresden* and the *Nuremberg* had succeeded in escaping. The captain, looking radiant, came down from the poop, and cried out in his harsh, quarter-deck voice: "This evening, illumination like day—grand ball!" Precisely at eight o'clock the ladies, in smart evening dresses, the gentlemen in black coats, appeared on deck, which was a blaze of light, with the boards carefully waxed. A slow movement of waves mingled its rhythm with the undulations of the valse, the sound of dying billows softly punctuated the notes of the orchestra. The couples glided along, turned, swung to and fro, and from the shadow into which, as mere onlookers, we had retired, the pink and white toilettes with rather African *décolletages*, the elegant and slender Englishmen in their dress coats and starched shirt-fronts, the patches of light and shade sharply cutting each group, gave a *chiaroscuro* effect that was most fascinating. The quick and lissom young English girls fluttered like dainty birds—

"As the swallow mingles with the waves,  
Her wings teasing the angry sea."

And then the orchestra, freshened by whisky, struck up, in valse time, "It's a long, long way to

Tipperary," the war song that has been so popular in London. The gallery accompanied the orchestra, in the depth of the ship the stokers, hard at work, raised their heads, and in an instant, down to the third deck, waiters and stewardesses, attracted in their turn, joined in wildly singing and whistling "It's a long, long way ——." The night breeze passed gently, with zephyr-like caresses, over the interwoven couples, and I thought of the sharp icy wind blowing over the land of Flanders, causing our valiant soldiers to crouch down in their trenches, cowering in the snow and chilled to the bone.

When the ship passed the Equator they had the good taste to refrain from the famous baptism, that joke of the long sea voyage, which consists in ducking every passenger crossing the line for the first time. They limited themselves to funny stories, and there were peals of laughter on all sides. Some one related that once, on the request of a young lady to be shown the equatorial line, that old sea-dog of a captain of ours went to his cabin, took a telescope and put a hair across the lens; then giving the instrument to the charming inquirer, he said, "Well, do you see the line now?" "Oh yes!" was the reply, "I even see a camel walking all along it!"

A day and a half's navigation along the African coast, and messengers from shore appeared, the first sea-gulls. Their black wings enhanced the delicate charm of their white plumage flecked with grey, and there was a languorous grace in their gliding flight. There was such transparency in the atmosphere, the air was so clear that the horizon



seemed to have receded to an illimitable distance. The blue sea and sky became finer in the gentle shades of a diaphanous celestial azure, the ocean assumed the opalescent tints of mother-o'-pearl. It was a triumphant reign of sun and colour; at times the waves were as though spangled, one might have thought that millions of many-coloured *confetti* blended in the sea, giving it the variegated tints of the rainbow.

It was warm—ninety-two degrees Fahrenheit—and that morning the bath water, drawn straight from the sea, was quite tepid. All the passengers were dressed in white, and lay motionless about the deck. Oh! the charm of basking in the sun like a lizard! The air was so invigorating that we could live on it; the gong summoning us to luncheon had only a qualified success; the dining-saloon was deserted, the ventilators, which made a great disturbance, only displaced caloric. The heat was atrocious, and the waiters perspired into the dishes.

That evening the sunset, mostly commonplace enough, was rich in colouring. Fleecy clouds festooned the west; they were uniform in their red colour, a ruby glow fading away into the dull shade of wine dregs. The whole ocean took the same hue, the ruddy waves showing in their troughs curving lines of ochre; the shades of night drew on with amaranthine tint; vessel and passengers had a yellowish tinge. Leaning on the hammock in contemplation of this scene I dreamed again—for it returned to me like an obsession—of my distant country, the dear plains of Flanders, red also at that very hour, red with devastating fires, red with the blood of our brave soldiers whose bodies, young

and supple, muscular and beautiful, are stretched lifeless on their native soil.

A young lady who spoke French came and sat down by my side. She, too, was filled with admiration of the vision before us, and smilingly remarked : "What a pretty sight, sir, the sea looks as pink as a fine sunrise."

### CHAPTER III

AT last we heard some one shout, "The Cape of Good Hope!" and in the distance, standing out in golden sunshine and the blue of the sea, arose the lofty peak that marked the end of our voyage.

The passengers congratulated each other, not altogether cheerfully, glad indeed that the journey was safely over, but regretful at the thought of imminent separation.

Amongst travellers on board ship there is always a sort of affectionate comradeship, owing no doubt to the inevitable necessity of living together, partaking of the same meals, and sharing the same saloon, the same risks; they are in one house, and on board ship there is no going beyond the walls. Hence the need for a wide and mutual tolerance, shutting one's eyes to faults and whims of people whom it is impossible to avoid by slamming the door or walking in the opposite direction. One finds oneself, moreover, amongst men of the world, belonging to different branches of social activity; conversation is full of interest; every one displays certain of his attainments, and that lasts just as long as it is necessary to show only one's best side.

I shall long retain the memory of the warm

hand-clasps and sympathy of all those temporary friends, who in so many different and touching ways lavished on us wishes for the good success of our mission. About ten days before the end of the voyage, the captain made known our position as official delegates from Belgium, and gave orders that at the evening concerts the Belgian Hymn should be played immediately after the English National Anthem.

Capetown and its charming setting has often been described, but no sketch can give an adequate idea of its grandeur and grace. It is that blend of grandeur and delicate grace that creates the striking impression left by the panorama of the Cape. It is useless to try to compare it with any other place in the world. Table Mountain, which frames and dominates the Bay, is unique. There are many higher mountains, but few give such an impression of an overhanging, crushing weight as this one does. It is by no means one of the finest ; this strange shape of a table standing up three thousand six hundred feet in the air affords to the eye only the surprise of the unexpected. It does not follow any familiar mountain form, it has neither a peak nor a dome, but is flat like a large board ; one might imagine that a giant artisan had chiselled the summit in a long faultless line standing out upon the sky, a square horizontal model, the black mass of which harshly emphasizes the zenith. Two isolated peaks rise in pyramid form to the right and left of Table Mountain, an equal distance away, forming pendants to the centre piece ; this gives a spurious decoration, something artificial that one finds disconcerting. The simile is rather lugubrious, but one might

without injustice compare the strange shape of Table Mountain to a gigantic catafalque flanked by colossal lamp-posts.

In Table Bay the ocean waves die at the very feet of the town in an ideally blue crescent, whence the city of a thousand white houses, hidden in greenery and flowers, rises and spreads in stages right up to the dark sides of Table Mountain.

The panorama has so massive and graceful a character that it fixes itself for ever unforgettably in the eyes of those who have beheld it.

The *Briton* went alongside and the authorities soon came on board : Sir David Graaff, representing the Government ; the venerable President of the Senate, Mr. Reitz, formerly President of the Free Orange Republic, whose great height and flowing beard gave a good idea of the characteristic type of old Boer ; the Mayor of Capetown, and his secretary ; Mr. Jagger, member for the Cape ; some town councillors ; the Roman Catholic Dean ; a Protestant pastor ; the Governor's secretary, and the officials of the Belgian consulate. Deeply touched as I was by this reception, and the honour paid to the Belgian Mission in Africa, I expressed my emotion at landing in Africa, the representative of a people frightfully trampled on by a barbarous enemy, who, not content with torturing us, desires also to slander us and rob us of our honour. But the Belgians are determined not to let that be done, and, were calumny to travel to the ends of the earth, truth will triumph over it.

Photographers assembled and one had to submit, and learn how to "pose" in the different attitudes these artists prescribe. The Press also—the Fourth

Estate—appeared, and were received with all the consideration due to their position ; they are, it must be remembered, a strongly organized power in South Africa. We disembarked at nine o'clock in the morning, and by mid-day they were selling special editions in Capetown, with a first interview and a pen-portrait of the Belgian delegates. The sketch, made in a few moments, shows that the African reporters have no cause to envy their European *confrères* in regard to details of information. They said—

“Dr. Van der Perre, who voluntarily offered himself for the interview, is a little below medium height, strongly built, with a steady eye ; he has thick and abundant hair, in colour verging upon red, and a bristling moustache.

“Barrister Standaert is of more reserved demeanour, tall, slim, with pointed beard, short hair of an iron-grey shade, and a bearing quiet and full of dignity.”

The same evening the journals published our photographs, with these words in a caption : “The Missioners from Noble Belgium.”

The friendly Mayor took us in his motor-car to an hotel. Capetown has a quite European aspect : Adderley Street is a modern avenue worthy of our great capitals, with large and stately buildings. Numerous electric tram-cars traverse and enliven the streets more than pedestrians, who are rather few in number ; though it must be confessed that the sun is fairly scorching. We made our official visits to the Governor, Sir Frederick de Waal,

General Thompson the Commandant, and the Mayor of Capetown, who in due course returned the civility.

The General, very English in appearance, tall, thin, with grey moustache, bright eyes, and bronzed complexion, received us with the correctness of a perfect gentleman. We chatted for a long time, and he listened attentively to our account of the atrocities committed in Belgium. At times a flash of anger glittered in his eyes, and a shuddering exclamation escaped him—"I cannot realize it!"

The General himself did the honours of the castle—the Fort of Good Hope—which is his residence and that of part of the garrison. The Fort, constructed after the system of De Vauban, dates from the seventeenth century, and is the work of the Dutch, whose coat-of-arms decorates the frontals of the porches. The central court is very attractive, and the General's house is graced by a *perron* ornamented by Corinthian columns supporting a frieze in surprisingly good taste. By the steps is some old ironwork of very pure style, and from the top of the slopes which rise from the sea the view is extremely fine.

On returning to our hotel we were presented with a salver piled with visiting cards; among them I found the names of notabilities of the Magistracy and Bar, with a specially kind word for the President of the Order of Advocates at Bruges.

We had a visit from the Belgian colony in Capetown; only a dozen or so live in the town and its environs. Needless to say, this interview was affecting, and questions were anxiously asked—"Is it true what we hear?—And Malines?—Ter-

monde?—Is it possible? We thought it was all exaggerations or inventions of the newspapers!”

Our good fellow-countrymen laid themselves out to do us the honours of the country; they wished to be the first to entertain us. Although we protested, not having come to Africa to be fêted, they would not be denied. Everything had been arranged and settled; we should really disappoint them greatly by refusing.

After breakfast the Belgian colony called for us in three motor-cars decked with tri-coloured flags. With charming thoughtfulness, our compatriots had planned for us an excursion said to be one of the prettiest in the world. The route skirting the ocean gradually rose to two hundred feet above the blue billows washing the “Twelve Apostles,” a series of hills with fantastic brown caps rising in a line. The winding road changed its aspect continually, now advancing in a bold point hanging over the sea, then bending into valleys, wild or peaceful. Bays were followed in turn, either verdure-clad or a chaos of rocks. Everywhere was a rampant vegetation of rare orchises and giant heaths, with unfamiliar flowers such as the salkerbloem, a blossom the size of one’s fist, with wonderful filigree work of white and gold. The succession of inlets with their panoramic views of surprising variety gives so rapid a change of view that one might imagine a machine to be at work, throwing on the screen a succession of picturesque and marvellously lighted scenes. From the banks of the Atlantic on one side of the Cape we passed to the shore of the Indian Ocean, with the deliciously soft outlines of the Blue Mountains in the background. Large



tropical trees rose proudly towards the horizon, and over all was a vibrant air of radiant and diaphanous quality, giving indescribable clearness to distances in Africa.

On returning to the hotel after thanking my compatriots, I shut myself up in my room, feeling intoxicated with excess of air and light. I closed my eyes only to see again in the darkness all this profusion of colour, flowers, blue sky and sunshine.

For a few days we kept in touch with the authorities and the population ; it was necessary to prepare in every detail our tours through an immense stretch of country, and before entering the territory we had to study its approaches, features and surroundings. Very soon we were in difficulties over the two elements that divide the Union—the English and the Boer element ; each tried the high hand with us, moved by opposing sentiments, endeavouring to draw the Belgian Mission in their wake. It needed some diplomacy to maintain the strict neutrality imposed on us as a primary duty.

Moreover, the general situation in South Africa appeared at close quarters much more unsettled than might have been suspected from the news, lately received in Europe, that had passed the censor. A veritable romance, stirring and vivid, had just developed down there.

To judge the men and the affairs of South Africa fairly, it would be necessary to enter into the psychology of the Boer, and that is no easy matter. After having associated with him for some weeks, and

having been admitted into his confidence, the Boer left on me the impression of being both sentimental and proud.

If the open-air life, hunting, and riding through the bush makes the Boer a lover of adventurous expeditions, he is at the same time a good father, a faithful husband, and that keeps him in check ; he misses his home when he is for any length of time away from it. Like the Flemish peasant, the Boer is distrustful, but perhaps he carries it too far. I remarked on this to one of them, and he replied : " It may be the hunting for big game that does that ; and then, have we not many times in our lives been taken in and made fools of ? " There is, above all, in the Afrikander a great deal of good sense, and that quality, which is often worth more than cleverness, enables him to rectify, promptly enough, the errors or excesses to which his imperious and somewhat embittered nature may lead him. Above all, the *Taal*, the old Dutch language, is dear to him, and if, like the Flemings, he easily picks up other languages, there is in that neither an abdication nor a weakening of the fierce love he professes for his mother tongue. He has the reputation of lacking intelligence ; our intercourse with him proves this opinion false. How many times in the farmhouses have we not found works of Flemish or Dutch literature—the works of Guido Gezelle, for instance—denoting a real taste for literary culture ! One may imagine how the trickeries of German policy, using flattery and false promises, had a fine field of action in such a nature. " The dream of the Boers' independence was also Germany's dream ; together, one day, they would realize it, and create an African

Empire, extending from the Cape to the Congo, and from Walfisch to Delagoa Bay."

It is well known how Germany has established almost everywhere down there hamlets, schools, churches, farms and clubs, with German pastors and instructors. All that fostered the process of Germanization in the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

No one heeded, and it was only at the time of the declaration of war in 1914 that one's eyes were suddenly opened.

It is proved to-day, beyond dispute, that the decisive phases of German intrigue in South Africa go back to 1913, and that the immediate efforts made with a view to stirring up rebellion amongst the Boers date from June and July 1914. These facts establish beyond doubt Germany's premeditated letting loose of the European War.

A rebel commandant named Wolmarans, on August 3, 1914, issued a proclamation warning his men that they had to prepare for immediate mobilization, with a view to appearing at the frontier of German South-West Africa, where arms and munitions were in readiness for them. What did such language mean? It was shown only too well by the upshot.

In the region of Upington, on the German frontier in the north of Cape Colony, the military forces of the Union found themselves under the command of Colonel Solomon Maritz. Politician as well as officer, Maritz was an opponent of Botha's Government; he belonged to the Nationalist party, of which General Herzog was parliamentary chief. Maritz had, it was said, often declared to any who would listen to him, that the day England entered into a

great European or Colonial war, would be the day of independence for the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

Before August 2, 1914, Maritz had entered into the following negotiations with the German Governor of the neighbouring colony. Between the latter and the Boer Colonel—promoted by the Kaiser, in view of the responsibility of the contract, to the rank of General—there was signed at the beginning of the war a solemn treaty in seven articles, of which this is the purport—

“Between the Governor of South-West Africa, acting in the name of His Majesty the German Emperor, and General Solomon G. Maritz, acting in the name of a group of officers and commanders disposed to proclaim the independence of South Africa, it has been agreed that :

“1. General Maritz will proclaim the independence of South Africa, and declare war upon England.

“2. The German Governor by every means in his power will aid the Boer forces in their struggle against England.

“3. The German Governor will do everything necessary to ensure that the independence of the South African Union shall be recognized by the German Government and by the general treaty of peace to be signed in Europe.

“4. In consideration of the aid lent by Germany, the bay called Walfisch Bay and its islands shall become German possessions.

“5. The Orange River will be the frontier between German South-West Africa and Cape Colony.

"6. Germany will not oppose the occupation by the Boers of Delagoa Bay, belonging to Portugal.

"7. If the rebellion fails, the rebels who fall back on to German territory will be regarded and treated as German subjects."

There seems to me to be wanting in this treaty an eighth and last article, stipulating what should happen in the event of South-West Africa ceasing to be German !

After the declaration of war in Europe, Maritz, an agreement with the Governor of German South-West Africa, was the negotiator and organizer of the rebellion. For some weeks he succeeded in concealing his double-dealing ; to the pressing injunctions of the Government of Pretoria he gave dilatory answers.

But now the German troops, in their impatience to invade the South African Union, committed the mistake of crossing the frontiers of Cape Colony at Nakal and Schuitdrift. Botha immediately convoked Parliament, to ask the necessary credits in view of the defence of the Union's territory, and the raising of an expeditionary corps for operations against German South-West Africa.

Parliament placed entire confidence in Botha, and it was then that Generals Christian De Wet and Beyers arose to protest. The last-named was commander-in-chief of the territorial army of the Union. De Wet in the Orange Free State, and Beyers in the Transvaal, tried everywhere to arouse popular indignation against the Government, as guilty of making war on a sister race, a friendly race to which the Boers are bound by ties of the closest

brotherhood. This is what Beyers said : "To bear arms against the brave and sympathetic German people would be to cover ourselves with eternal shame. If this impious act should be accomplished, the curse of God would lie on us for ever." This was on the eve of September 15, and September 15 was *de dag* ("the day").

The most influential and most determined of the rebels met in great numbers at Potchefstroom, where, it was hoped, command would be assumed by Delarey, the eloquent and popular General, the warrior beloved of all, whose magic influence would attract the masses. After Delarey had hoisted the *Vierkleur*, the two thousand Boers under arms were to go in equal numbers towards East and West, and the two divisions have their numbers continually increased by the arrival of eager recruits ranging themselves under the old banner of independence.

The date of September 15 had been chosen because a seer, whose high repute is well known in the Transvaal, had seen in a dream the number 15 appear on a dark cloud, and below it General Delarey followed by a flower-laden car.

On the evening of September 15, Beyers, who had that morning sent in his resignation as General of the forces of the Union, left Pretoria, taking with him in his motor-car General Delarey. The route to Potchefstroom obliged them to go through Johannesburg. On reaching the gates of this city, the machine was surrounded by a cordon of police, ordered to arrest three thieves, who were said to be escaping with their booty in a motor-car. Beyers, seeing the police, believed they had come to arrest

him. He lost his head and ordered his chauffeur to go on at full speed in spite of the summons ; the police then made use of their firearms, and General Delarey, pierced by a bullet, died immediately.

At the camp of Potchefstroom the rebels were full of eagerness and impatience ; the whole day was spent in parade drill, for it was necessary to pay exceptional military honour to the great General so feverishly expected. But the hours passed away, and feelings of anxiety and doubt were becoming universal, when, late in the evening, an express messenger galloped up at full speed to the entrance of the camp. Very soon nothing was heard but loud cries of dismay, "Delarey is dood geschiet." ("Delarey has been killed.")

The mortal blow that struck down the unfortunate Delarey seemed to have killed the rebellion itself. In a very few hours his devoted followers had dispersed in disorder, and a certain Major X——, who the same day had sent in his resignation, mounted his horse and galloped off to the neighbouring post office to recover his letter ; but he was too late, the post had gone out.

The first phase of the rebellion had failed. De Wet, whose strong will and tenacity are proverbial, was not the man to throw up the sponge. Inquiry was made about the death of Delarey ; some people were foolish enough to say that Botha had had him assassinated. A solemn funeral service held at Pretoria, and the interment with great pomp at Lichtenburg, were made the occasions of political demonstrations. The motor-car in which the General had been killed was exhibited, and became the object of popular pilgrimages.

The Generals De Wet, Beyers, and Kemp then organized a series of meetings in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and, wishing to keep their propaganda within the limits of constitutional legality, announced that the movement started by them had only one end in view—to protest against the Parliament's vote and against the war on Germany. It was a singularly agitated and troublous campaign ; the country of the ancient republics is, it appears, the classic ground of disorderly meetings, in which rotten bananas and pears, shouts, quarrels and blows played a prominent part. Soon all the region of Lichtenburg, Pretoria, Rustenburg, Kroonstad, Harrismith, and Heidelberg was in a whirl of excitement. At the same time a swarm of German agents invaded the Transvaal and Orange Free State, to make known the "truth" about events in Europe—truth that newspapers controlled by the censor were unable to tell. That "truth" was the excuse of Germany, her justification of the war against our little country, as a traitor to all her engagements. It was nothing but a collection of the most abominable slanders of the Belgians and their country.

The ground being thus prepared, in the early days of October Maritz threw off the mask ; he collected his commando, and preached revolt to them, ordering those who did not wish to follow him to leave the ranks. Out of six hundred men sixty stepped forward ; Maritz had them arrested and conducted to the German frontier, where waited a detachment of the Kaiser's soldiers to take the loyalist prisoners to Windhoek.

Faced by these events, the Government of Pre-



toria at last decided, on October 10, to proclaim martial law. De Wet, who never went about without a guard of honour of sixty mounted men, seemed also to have taken a decisive step; he organized commandos in the Orange Free State, and proceeded to make requisitions, ordering the officers at Kroonstad, Harrismith, Boshof, Bethlehem and other localities to levy their men. In the Transvaal, Beyers, on his part, was very busy.

At Lichtenburg, on October 18, at the moment when three hundred cavalry of the regular troops of the Union were about to entrain for Pretoria, a faithful follower of General Beyers, Field-Cornet Claassen, sprang up in front of the railway station, and rising in his stirrups cried to the soldiers, "Those who love me, follow me!" and went off at a gallop, taking with him a hundred and fifty horsemen. This same field-cornet, six days later, issued throughout his district the following summons—

*"October 24, 1914.*

"All citizens of the South African Union, aged from sixteen to sixty years, are required to be at Hakbosch on Tuesday, October 27, 1914, at eight o'clock in the morning, with horse, saddle, munitions and provisions for eight days.

"By order of Commandant General Beyers.

"J. E. CLAASSEN,  
"V. K."

From this moment it was revolution: all regular traffic was interrupted, rails were removed, telegraph wires cut, horses and cattle requisitioned by force, shops pillaged, farms burned, bridges destroyed.

Botha, having exhausted all attempts at a friendly arrangement, after numerous efforts of conciliation on the part of the venerable President Steyn, formerly chief of the Orange Republic, and after trying every means of avoiding collision with brothers of the same blood, declared that he was going to end the rebellion by force of arms. At the same time he proclaimed a general amnesty for all those who would prove their submission by returning instantly to their farms. De Wet, who, on November 7, had defeated a weak body of the Union troops commanded by P. Cronje, replied to Botha's amnesty by stating his own conditions in the form of an ultimatum, to the effect that every one would become law-abiding again if the Government at Pretoria renounced the war against Germany.

From that moment began the struggle between the regular troops of the Union and the rebel commandos. Botha pushed matters vigorously: Beyers was defeated near Pretoria, at Potchefstroom, at Rustenburg, and at Treurfontein, where his commandos were dispersed, and the General himself obliged to flee. Some days later, in the course of a skirmish, he fell, mortally wounded.

De Wet, who had collected under his orders more than five thousand men, was not more fortunate. Beaten in several engagements, seeing every day his forces diminished by the great number of individual surrenders to Botha, he was completely checkmated and taken prisoner.

Thus the second phase of the rebellion proved abortive. There remained Solomon Maritz.

On "December 16, in the year 1914 A.D.," he sent out solemnly under his sign-manual the order eman-

cipating the ancient South African republics. At the same time he constituted a provisional government of the free republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State: this government was composed of Beyers, De Wet, Maritz, Kemp and Bezuidenhout.

His very long edict in the old Dutch style of long ago is of little interest. I extract from it, however, one article that attracts attention, because it is a novel and simple form of moratorium in times of war—

“All pecuniary claims, of whatever nature, are suspended until three months after the war, and all claims whatsoever shall cease to bear interest during the same period.”

Maritz's last hope was to see all the rebels, isolated or in groups, make for the frontier to join up with the German troops, and thus mass against Botha. On this point Maritz was in complete accord with De Wet. After his first defeats, some days before he was taken prisoner, De Wet had urged the same tactics on his men. “We ought,” he said, “to join forces with Maritz and the Germans who are holding guns, munitions and money at our disposal, besides numerous cannon; then, all together, we shall march on Pretoria, where the English flag will be lowered to make room for the *Vierkleur*.” And when men of different commandos, very sceptical about the realization of this plan, turned and muttered to themselves, he added: “Let those who will not listen to me return home; I will follow my road with my faithful commando, and if that abandons me I shall go on with the last of my friends, and when no more are left to me I shall go with my sons; if need be, Christian De Wet will go alone.”

What melancholy words, what bitter presentiment ! Yet he did not suspect that on the very day following this speech one of his sons would quit the ranks and surrender to Botha.

There is something dramatic in the behaviour of this Transvaal hero, the great De Wet, the "phantom" General whom the whole world admires for his skilful audacity, casting in the face of his commandos and his own people the haughty challenge of their desertion.

One cannot help recalling that other political unfortunate, who, in his pride and despair, cried to the messengers from Rome : "Go and tell the Prætor that you have seen Marius sitting on the ruins of Carthage."

## CHAPTER IV

THIS was indeed a nice state of things ! It will easily be understood that it was with a certain amount of apprehension that we asked ourselves what we were going to do.

Certainly we had no intention of mixing ourselves up with South African politics, and we were thoroughly agreed on the point of keeping out of them. But it was necessary to defend Belgium against German slander, and to tell the people of the Union about the undeserved suffering and misery into which the German barbarism had plunged the country. Now we had just learned that the rebel party in South Africa championed a policy clearly favourable to the Germans, and that the "pro-German" idea was the very foundation of their programme.

If the rebels succeeded might not our mission have serious political consequences ? Would the leaders tolerate us ? Were we, the official delegates from Belgium, proceeding towards a series of violent and disorderly meetings such as are traditional in the Transvaal ?

We had plenty of questions to ask ourselves ! No one will be surprised to hear that the Consul-General of one of the great European Powers in Africa had drawn up for his Government a report couched in the following terms—

"An official mission despatched by the Belgian Government has arrived at Capetown. The purport of this mission is to check the campaign of lies and slander everywhere pursued against Belgium and her citizens. In view of the mental excitement and seriously disturbed condition of the Union, I doubt if the Belgian delegates can proceed with the accomplishment of their mission, which is a courageous one, no doubt, but attended with the greatest risk."

Three days after our landing I received from a Boer leader a letter, of which the following is a translation—

"MUCH HONOURED BROTHER OF OUR RACE,

"About a week ago your arrival here was announced in the papers. What can be the object of your visit ?

"Would you make us forget the terrible war of 1899-1902, the memory of which haunts us as if it had been yesterday, a war that martyred a population of peaceable Boers attached to their traditions and their language, just to sacrifice them to the greed of certain millionaires ? Let your first visit be to the impressive monument at Bloemfontein, which has immortalized for ever the odious crimes committed against the Boers of the Republic.

"We are living here, at this moment, under harsh laws ; all books dealing with the Boer War are prohibited.

"And we are inundated with pamphlets distributed by Pretoria, on the subject of the pretended German atrocities. You will doubtless appeal to the

South African public in your fine Flemish language ; but then, as regards those who do not understand you, your mission will be fruitless. As for those who do understand you—the true Africans—who have always struggled for the rights of language and nationality, does not your mission appear as though it would strike them to the heart ?

“Read the works of the man who came to greet you on board the steamer, Mr. Reitz, ‘A Century of Wrong,’ and ‘How they learnt to die,’ by Jordaan. Have pity upon our poor oppressed people ; do not come and aggravate our sufferings. As a proud and noble son of Flanders, do not permit any one to make use of you against your blood brothers. Follow the example of the Belgian *député* Louis Franck, who was here some weeks ago, comfort our people, and encourage them in their struggle to retain their language, their struggle for their rights.

“With high esteem,

“Your servant,

(Signed) “——

“P.S.—Sir X—— unfortunately is the wrong man to advise you. His title of ‘Sir’ says quite enough : no African worthy of the name would bear it.”

Written in a fine language, resembling Flemish more nearly than Dutch, this letter, vigorous and somewhat abrupt, but courteous all the same, revealed a mind perplexed and offended by the Belgian Mission. It proved at the same time how difficult and delicate was our position in the eyes of the Boers.

Having talked with people able to enlighten us, made numerous visits to authorities, and examined and weighed up everything, we decided to undertake a journey across South Africa, and to make a two months' trip to the principal centres of the immense territories of the Union. Objections were made about the fatigue, the heat, of which we probably had no idea, the difficulties of travelling, the slowness of communications, possible misadventures ; all this seemed of secondary importance before the conviction that to succeed and attain our end we must move quickly, without looking back.

Our first meeting was held at Stellenbosch. This is an important Boer centre, situated thirty-six miles from Capetown ; a place of considerable culture, where a high-class education may be obtained, and where the old Dutch language is encouraged. It is also the seat of the Calvinistic Seminary, which sends out pastors in all directions, fostering the religious spirit of their ancestors, that cult of race and language to which the Afrikanders are so staunchly faithful. Stellenbosch is the Boers' *Alma Mater*. There is a very characteristic expression used in South Africa : they talk of *den Stellenboschen geest* ("the spirit of Stellenbosch") to denote the critical and rather anti-British sentiment, very exclusive in the matter of language, held by some of the young Boers. This first meeting was of capital importance ; on its success or failure might depend the future of our mission—and I viewed with some anxiety the responsibility which lay upon us.

Leaving Capetown at seven o'clock in the morn-



ing, we arrived about half-past nine at Stellenbosch. The Mayor met us at the station, and a motor-car took us to his house, where a reception was held in our honour.

It was a fairly large gathering, and we were affably greeted, curiosity to see us and speak to us being everywhere visible.

On a terrace commanding a panorama of wooded and flower-carpeted scenery, and framed with scented heliotrope and crimson ramblers, I was overwhelmed with attention and kindness by the graceful hostess. Suddenly, rising from her chair, she introduced me to one of the head professors of Stellenbosch. Without loss of time I found myself engaged in an animated conversation in correct and familiar Dutch. "Do you not understand what use they want to make of you here? A great movement which may yet succeed has begun in South Africa. We persist in our desire for liberation from the foreign yoke; powerful Germany urges us on, and wishes to help us by every means in her power. And you, who are brothers of our race, come and oppose this effort; you are going to bring trouble and indecision into the midst of the Boers. Just think how indispensable to our success is the pro-German sentiment." This was said with considerable emotion, and there was a break in the speaker's voice. I replied somewhat as follows: "We have come to you as the Boers came to us in 1902. You suffered bitterly then; we suffer a hundred times more bitterly to-day. Not only have the Germans martyred us, but the organ of their agents slanders us, painting us as degenerate and guilty, as alone responsible for all the ills that afflict Belgium. We owe it to

our honour before the world, to the old renown of the Flemish race, to refute the German lies. Belgian delegates have gone all over the world to publish the truth, and expose the lie, and would you, the brothers of our race, repel us? That would be a shame, and at the same time the basest ingratitude!" My questioner, visibly surprised by my warm feelings, found nothing to say but "What a pity it is such an inopportune moment; believe me, you are like an English dog blundering into a Boer game of skittles."

The Mayor soon made a sign that the hour appointed for the meeting had arrived.

Six hundred people filled the large hall, women and men, the latter bearded in the well-known Boer fashion, sitting in a quiet and resigned manner, their eyes alert and keen. The younger people stood at the back of the hall, attentive and interested in everything. We were escorted to the platform by a score of leading citizens. The audience raised their heads and fixed questioning glances at the people following us. Every now and then we noticed neighbours nudging each other vigorously with their elbows, in surprise at seeing such and such a person appear. It seems that those who took their places behind the speakers were openly asserting their sympathy with them; and the public, seeing us in such company, were visibly puzzled. Needless to say, I did not notice my new acquaintance, the professor, on the platform.

The Mayor introduced us in a quiet but friendly speech. I took a rapid survey of the audience, and saw before me a public half urban, half agricultural, attracted thither less by sympathy than

by curiosity to see and listen to us ; a gathering restless and of doubtful sympathies, whom we had to be careful to handle properly. While the Mayor was making his speech and I was already standing beside him, the curious thought came into my head that one might compare the Belgian Mission to the fruit of the tree of good and evil.

My heart was beating as if it would burst, and that imparted to my voice the emotional nervous quality that is so impressive: all ears were wide open, and the sounds of the Flemish tongue, which most of my hearers knew only from books,—those inflexions, so different from, and yet so like, their own,—secured me at once a friendly hearing. I spoke for a long time of Flanders, my fair Flanders, so beautiful, so rich, so prosperous, adorned with her famous monuments, haloed by her interesting history. I spoke of the peaceable inhabitants, the peasants, the country's "Boers," the men who fill the many granaries, indefatigable workers rescuing the ground from unproductiveness to the last inch. I spoke of the humble Flemish homestead, the abode of simple peace, where, of an evening, round the fireside would gather for rest or prayer families of good folk, the gentlest and most peaceful in the world. I spoke of the women so frightfully slandered by the German emissaries in Africa, accused of having put out the eyes, and cut off the ears, of wounded Germans.

Oh ! that outrage upon our brave, our sublime Belgian women ! In the eyes of those who know them and their peaceful lives given over to domestic pleasures,—who know their simple manners and devoted hearts, how unselfishly they accept the

heavy burden of their numerous families, how kind, hospitable and generous they are,—that slander is a most atrocious infamy.

When I boldly outlined the invasion by the barbarians :—Malines, Termonde, Louvain, Dixmude, Nieuport, Furnes, Ypres : riches stolen or destroyed ; art treasures reduced to ashes ; peaceful populations tortured, exterminated, hounded away ; rapine, murder, incendiaries destroying wholesale ; civilians martyred ; priests ignominiously assassinated—the audience showed great emotion and at times shuddered with horror.

Visibly the cause was won.

I ended simply with these words : “ I have come to you to tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth : now I would have you judge, and I ask you this : by your souls and conscience before God and before men, should you not abhor and despise the barbarous German, and show warm sympathy for my dear Flanders, murdered and crucified ? ”

Oh, Flanders ! If you could have heard the burst of enthusiasm, if you could have seen the sincere fervour in the faces of these honest Boers who had doubted you, doubted your loyalty and your old renown, and who now suddenly gave back to you all their esteem and love !

My colleague, in a beautifully eloquent speech, roused the audience once more, and was loudly applauded. When we left the hall, the public gathered in the street and greeted us with renewed cheers and warm demonstrations.

In the neighbourhood of Stellenbosch resides the greatest statesman of South Africa, Mr. J. X.

Merriman, the *Grand Old Man* of the Union, who did us the honour of inviting us to dinner. Along a narrow, picturesque and isolated road we rolled in a motor-car past grape-laden vineyards, which cover the valley and hillsides with their wealth. At the bottom of the valley, shaded by venerable trees, in an indescribably peaceful spot, stands "Schoongezicht," the old Dutch cottage inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Merriman; a simple, one-storeyed country-house. Two carved gables with small leaded windows give a touch of lightness to the sober framing of foliage. A fountain, playing close to the threshold, makes its little humid sounds, suggestive of freshness. All around, mingled with graceful and elegant tropical plants, are fruit trees of the rarest description; then there are the vines, which stretch away, climbing the hillside right up to the foot of a peak, over six thousand feet high, to its curved summit, a delightful *du Cervin* in miniature, rising in vivid relief against a circle of mountains which merge into the blueness of the distance. The whole is expressive of beauty and solitude, sweetness and peace.

It has been said, *à propos* of the Alhambra at Granada, that one does not know which to admire the more: the science of the master who conceived this marvel, or the genius of the artist who discovered so divine a site for the palace of the Moorish kings. I would say of Mr. Merriman that, notwithstanding his long and brilliant career, nothing like the choice of the site of "Schoongezicht" shows better his good taste, intelligent selection, and cheerful philosophy.

The ex-premier received us very simply ; just a warm hand-shake and a cordial welcome. He is more than six feet high, broad-shouldered, and a little bent beneath the weight of his seventy-two years. His brown, penetrating eyes, iron-grey hair, vivacious manner, and great ease of attitude and gesture give him an indescribable air of distinction, that pronounces him at first sight to be a man of high and refined nature. His clear, powerful voice is one of those that in bursts of eloquence, or the ironies of humour, assume the shades and inflexions so invaluable to an orator. Mrs. Merri-man, who recalls the fine Dutch type, seems made to preside over a *salon*. Her simple dignity of manner, affability, ease of conversation, art of making everybody talk, attentiveness to each guest in turn, combined with a very tactful manner of repressing those who would monopolize the talk, or talk too much, render her the ideal wife for a statesman. Mrs. Merriman speaks very fluent and pure Dutch.

The interior of the house is old, and as cosy as can be. The dining-room is low and wide, with venerable oak beams—an office which is one great library, containing some photographs and rare knick-knacks, amongst which is a valuable silver casket, a present from the Queen of England. If only those walls and those old books could speak ! They might recall half a century of the history of Africa, that stirring, painful, romantic history, of which there is not a page that does not bear the signature, initials, or mark—a deep one sometimes—of J. X. Merriman.

We passed some unforgettable hours in con-

versation with this illustrious statesman, whose talk, sometimes grave, sometimes light and amusing, revealed the brilliant qualities of a quick, instructive intelligence, allied to the most extensive knowledge.

A grower of vines, forest trees, fruit trees and garden stuff, Mr. Merriman, like a true colonial leader, desires to show to all, by his own example, that under the South African climate there is not an effort but may be crowned with success. He might, adoring the classics as he does, inscribe on the front of "Schoongezicht" that thought of Virgil's—*Carpent tua poma nepotes.*

The property, of which the owner did the honours with real pride, produces famous wines and luscious fruit. As formerly the lictors charged to bear the insignia of the dictatorship found Cincinnatus behind the plough, so the official envoys from Pretoria or the Cape find the "Right Honourable" in a workman's apron, pruning-hook or shears in hand.

On leaving "Schoongezicht," sped by the kind smile of Mrs. Merriman, I carried away with me a strong impression of the tall figure of the illustrious statesman, his intelligent, strong face animated by a gently ironical smile, the same strange, enigmatical smile that the artist of old Egypt expressed on the lips of Rameses II in a statue consecrated to immortality.

We returned to Capetown by the evening train, a little tired by a hard day's work and heat that was fairly atrocious; but happy in having scored an important initial success in the campaign in which we were engaged—happy also in gaining the sympathy

of the most esteemed statesman of the South African Parliament.

We had a "good Press." The papers announced in large type the report of the meeting at Stellenbosch. They were unanimous in describing the enthusiasm of the audience, and were warm in their praises of the Belgian delegates. Our success made a great impression at Capetown, and Reuter's agency cabled to London the news that the Belgian delegates were given a fine reception at their first meeting at Stellenbosch, "an important Boer centre." The Dutch papers were not behind in praising our speeches, and speaking of the deep impression produced upon the listeners by the description of acts of barbarity committed by the Germans in Belgium. This was a very important point, for the Afrikaners of the Transvaal and Orange Free State thus learned from their own organs the result of our first meetings, and perhaps how to model their sentiments on those of our first Boer audience. Stellenbosch had spoken!

The next day, whilst I stayed at Capetown to make the final arrangements for our long journey across the Union, my colleague was anxious to go alone to Paarl, an important industrial centre, where, under the presidency of the Mayor, Mr. S. de Villiers, an open-air meeting was held.

I felt some remorse in the evening, at seeing my colleague return, almost voiceless and worn out, but delighted by his success. Under a burning sun of 90° Fahr., and faced by an audience of



six hundred people, Dr. Van der Perre had spoken for two hours, rousing the enthusiasm of the Afrikanders assembled to listen to him.

Decidedly matters had begun well, but his loss of voice was unfortunate.

## CHAPTER V

CAPETOWN is almost exclusively an English-speaking place, and we had no need to make converts there. The clubs had opened their doors to us, the townsfolk their houses, and in the streets where, within a couple of days after our arrival, our faces were known, marks of respect and sympathy began to show themselves.

The "Mass Meeting" at Capetown was a rather impressive affair, a State show in honour of "Heroic Belgium." I was there put to a cruel test: the Mayor had insisted so firmly that there should be a speech in the English language that I ended by offering myself as victim on the altar of politeness. I do not know what surprised me the more on this occasion—hearing myself for the first time speak in English, or the discovery that people understood me, as not only did I get along quite well, but they applauded me loudly at the right places.

Long before half-past eight in the evening, the Town Hall, a large handsome building in the Italian Renaissance style, was invaded by the crowd. With a view to keeping out the riffraff, the prices of the two thousand seats of the Town Hall had been raised to benefit the Belgian Relief Fund. They were occupied immediately the doors opened,

and it became necessary to close them after upwards of seven hundred listeners had taken by storm all the available standing room. A sum of about eight hundred pounds was collected that evening for the Belgian Relief Fund.

Imagine an immense hall with wide, projecting galleries all of shining white, flooded with light ; an audience of three thousand two hundred in their best attire ; ladies in full evening dress with clusters of diamonds on their bare shoulders ; powerful instruments playing the *Brabançonne*, amid wild cheering, whilst through a little concealed door at the back the two Belgian delegates advanced on to a large platform, escorted only by Mr. John Parker, first magistrate of the city, Sir Frederick de Waal, chief public official of the province, and the Right Hon. J. X. Merriman, first citizen of the country.

Everybody who counted for anything in Capetown and all classes of society were represented there. In the first row were many members of both Houses, at their head Sir Thomas Smartt, leader of the Unionist party, the Archbishop of Capetown, the Bishop, several members of the Magistracy and of the Bar, of which Sir Henry Juta is President of the High Court.

Amid an impressive silence the Mayor said—

“It is a privilege which we highly esteem to welcome to our midst two citizens of noble Belgium. On my right is M. Standaert, President of the Order of Advocates and Member of Parliament for Bruges ; on my left, Dr. Van der Perre, Member for Antwerp.

“With all our hearts we bid them a cordial and sympathetic welcome ! We offer them our deepest sympathy in the grievous national misfortune that has befallen them. Mindful of the frightful tragedy that brings them into our midst, we tell them of our admiration for the heroism with which the brave soldiers of the glorious Belgian Army have fought for Right and Liberty ; we tell them we are proud to be allied to such a cause.

“Belgium is a small country, so small that we Africans have some trouble in imagining it. If it were transplanted here it would cover only the few thousand square miles extending from the sea to Worcester. But if Belgium is small in area, she will count henceforth as one of the greatest nations of the world, for she has gained immortal glory in this struggle for her independence and her national soul. Through immense losses and unimaginable ruin, Belgian honour shines pure and unharmed.

“How shameful that Germany should have assailed this noble little Belgium, violating at once her engagements and her honour ! Germany, a short time ago a great nation, powerfully organized and religiously minded, has to-day lapsed into idolatry ; she has made a god of her army, and this false god is only an idol, symbolical of the tyranny and oppression of the peoples.

“The immense gathering I see before me is dominated neither by hatred of Germany nor by an idle sense of curiosity, but by an intense love for Belgium. We have come here to hear the delegates of the Belgian Government tell us the truth concerning events that are developing in distant Europe, and to approve the noble impulse of the mother

country and of the British Empire, which aims at driving the invader of Belgium back to his own frontiers. We are proud of our youth in khaki who have left for the continent of Europe, but still more of them are wanted. Lord Kitchener asks for a million more, and he will get them ! It is at this price only that we shall see little Belgium, freed from her cruel oppressor, pass from the darkest and most tragic night of her history to the light and splendour of midday."

This was said very simply with eloquent good humour, but at the same time with great impressiveness.

Then came my turn to speak—to speak in English.

A newspaper which gave a complete *résumé* of my speech—thus proving that the reporter understood me—preceded it with the following impressions—

"When the leader of the Belgian Mission, tall and slender, the Belgian Order shining on his coat, rose on the platform, he was greeted by prolonged and hearty cheering. This evidently impressed the orator, who visibly braced himself to control his emotion. Then followed silence—a silence that could be felt. As the Mayor had humorously announced that the Belgian delegates had learned the English language on board the steamer which brought them out, and that one of them, M. Standaert, would speak in English, the audience seemed to imagine that, in deference to the general wish, the speaker was going to make

a great, and no doubt painful, effort. They also recognized the fact that the least murmur would upset him. His clear, full, well-modulated voice rose in the solemn silence, and his language, though somewhat foreign in construction, was perfectly well understood by all; not a word was lost. At first one hesitated to applaud for fear of interrupting this moving speech, but very soon cheers were raised, and at the end of the speech, when King Albert was mentioned, the enthusiasm was indeed thrilling, never to be forgotten."

Here is my speech—

"Mr. Mayor, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, "I do not know how to express the emotion I feel in thanking His Honour the Mayor for his eloquent speech, for his warm and friendly words, and this assembly for a reception instinct with sympathy and enthusiasm. I am distressed at not being able to express myself fluently in English—my colleague and I have only recently learnt the language; and in excuse I should say that we could not foresee that a day would come when Great Britain and little Belgium would be allies. Expressing myself in English is a sort of adventure for me, which I nevertheless dare to attempt in deference to you, and because I know that all your indulgence will be accorded to a maiden speech in the English tongue.

"There is no need to tell you how highly honoured we feel at having been chosen to come as delegates of the Belgian Government on an official mission to a population so distinguished and progressive as that of South Africa.

“We are the delegates of a noble and generous nation—yesterday the happiest and most prosperous on the continent of Europe, to-day ravaged by sword and fire, stained by ignominy and crime, scarcely a shred of the Fatherland left to it, desolated, tormented, destroyed. Our magnificent cities—Louvain, Malines, Termonde—our venerable towns—Dixmude, Nieuport, Furnes, Ypres—with their ancient monuments, which for more than seven hundred years were the pride of the Flemish people, that rejoiced in the art which compelled the respect of barbarians in all ages, are now nothing but ruins, cinders, dust. For a new barbarism, that of the twentieth century, has passed through. The prosperity of our industries, the activity of our manufactures, the abundance of our markets, the riches of our farms, the beauty of our live-stock, famous all the world over—all this is annihilated, stolen, destroyed, wiped out.

“Ah! if you had seen, as I have, the distracted flight of thousands upon thousands of unfortunate beings, without homes or property, driven from Louvain, Malines, Termonde, Aerschot! They fled, mad with terror, down the streets and roads: mothers dragging behind them five, six, seven children, emaciated, exhausted, in rags; haggard old folk, showing ever in their eyes the horrors of which they had been witnesses; young girls, their hair flying in the wind, as though stupefied by the brutalities of which they had been the victims—all these poor wretches carrying with them whatever belongings they had been able hastily to collect. And over this people, bowed down under a wind of

suffering, over these tragic throngs passed an indescribable blast of breathless terror, akin to madness. Whoever saw that—those mothers, those children, those old people—will retain for ever in his memory and his eyes an agonizing recollection, a horrible picture.

“And now the infamous enemy, not content with having despoiled and tormented us, wishes to slander, to defame us. Desirous of cleansing himself from his guilt he accuses and blackens his victim; he tries to dishonour us ; after having stolen everything else he wants to ravish our honour also. But that will never be ! As long as a single Belgian remains able to utter a single word, the protest will arise, indignant and vengeful, and the delegates of Belgium will go forth in all directions, to America, to Canada, to Italy, to Roumania, to Spain, to Switzerland, to Africa, to denounce to the civilized world the cruelties and barbarism of Germany.

“Even here the German emissaries have come to tell you that Belgium had ignored her neutrality ; that, in agreement with the enemies of Germany, the Belgian Army began hostilities as the vanguard of the French Army. And do we not see to-day ninety-three professors of the German Universities draw up and sign with their own hands a solemn address to the American people, declaring that it is Belgium who has fomented the war and threatened Germany !

“My answer will be very simple : either these professors did not read what they signed, or they take Americans for fools ; I am too polite to say that they deliberately put their signatures to what they knew to be lies.



“Despite all the learned men of Germany, are not facts stronger than quibbles?”

“The Italian Premier—whose word could not be suspected, as he has always been allied to the Central Powers—has admitted before the Parliament at Rome, that it was Germany who declared war, at the time when she invaded Belgium.

“General von Emmich, Commandant of the Army of the Meuse, at the moment of setting foot upon Belgian soil, issued a proclamation beginning in these words :

“‘To the Belgian People.

“‘I feel the greatest regret that the German Army should find itself obliged to cross the frontier of Belgium.’

“General von Bülow, Commander-in-Chief of the Second Army, said in his proclamation of August 19 :

“‘To the Belgian Nation.

“‘We have been obliged to penetrate into Belgian territory in order to protect the interests of national defence.’

“This language, these regrets, are they not the formal confession of a violation of territory, unprovoked, but excused in the eyes of Germany by the higher interests of self-protection ?

“Moreover, did not the Chancellor of the Empire, von Bethmann Hollweg, formally recognize on August 4 in the Reichstag the justice of Belgium’s case ? ‘Our troops,’ said he, ‘have occupied Luxembourg, and perhaps already Belgium.

This is in violation of national law. We are obliged to disregard the just protests of Belgium.'

"The just protests of Belgium'—is not that a characteristic avowal? Moreover, all those who, during the last fifteen years, have followed the evolution of international politics, know very well that neither France nor Great Britain menaced the peace of Europe; and the difficult negotiations entered into between England and Russia, proposing to Germany a limitation of armaments, prove that the *Entente Cordiale* had no other aim but peace, whilst Germany dreamed only of militarism and battles.

"This horrible war sprang from German policy, as fruit comes from blossom, and when, on August 4, 1914, Germany demanded of Sir Edward Grey that a friendly neutrality should be maintained, she asked him to renounce definitely the traditional policy of England, to repudiate her signature and obligations towards Belgium, whilst a mutilated France and a vanquished Russia should make the German the sovereign arbiter of Europe.

"But Belgium had already given the coarse giant the proud reply that does her honour, and had said to the Teuton when he overbearingly demanded a free passage to Paris: 'Belgium is not a road, Belgium is a nation.'

"And at the same time, Sir Edward Grey had replied through His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin, 'England has decided to respect the neutrality of Belgium; a formal treaty binds her to this; if England were to act otherwise, her signature would become worthless.'

"What a cheering spectacle was that, of a great

Empire and a tiny nation trying to make the German colossus understand that for peoples, as for individuals, there still exists by the world's laws something that is called conscience.

"But this language could not reach the level of 'Kultur,' and you know the Teuton's reply to the English Ambassador: 'The neutrality of Belgium? A word of little value, especially in war-time! The treaty guaranteeing the integrity of Belgian territory? A document of no importance—a scrap of paper.'

"Oh! that 'scrap of paper!' It will stick fast to the sides of Germany, like a shirt of Nessus, which she can never rid herself of. The contracts of Germany, her engagements, are straws in the wind, mere scraps of paper.

"Do you not see this is a reversion right back to barbarism? What is it, then, that distinguishes modern civilization if it be not that right is put before force, that the sanctity of the contract is substituted for violence and brigandage? What is it, tell me, that distinguishes the civilized man from the savage if it be not the cult of honour, respect for signed engagements? Admit for an instant, as a universal law, the theory of the scrap of paper, and what becomes of signatures, contracts and justice? It is the bankruptcy of right! And where right no longer holds sway the country becomes degenerate, its people savages; Dingaan and Selikat dictate the law; it is a return to the primitive times of brute force.

"When the Allies say that they struggle for the civilization of the world how truly they speak! when it is maintained that the Allies are fighting

the Huns of the twentieth century it is indeed the truth ! And yet this is perhaps unfair to the Huns ; the barbarians who in the fifth century infested Europe do not merit that insult. Had they enjoyed fifteen centuries more of civilization, those Huns would have blushed to display before the eyes of a time like ours such a riot of iniquity and cruelty.

“ It will be, in the eyes of history, the eternal pride of Belgium to have sacrificed everything, to have offered even her life, in the cause of humanity and civilization ! And it will also be the deathless pride of England to have nobly drawn the sword to aid the weak against the great !

“ Germany is in revolt against the public rights of Europe ; in the name of force she wishes to conquer justice, and, by the extermination of the small nationalities, intends to grasp for herself the domination of the world. Germany is at war to realize the dream of Treitschke, of Bernhardi, of all the champions of Teuton militarism : *Deutschland über Alles*.

“ And here to-day the cruelties and atrocities committed by the Germans in Belgium prove how awful a peril menaces the world, and what fate culture and German militarism promise us.

“ If at the present hour Germany makes an immense effort to save her good name and honour it is in vain, it is too late ! Her work of blood and ruin, the assassination of women, old people and children, the organized robberies, the methodical burning of towns and villages, violations, tortures, the officially ordered murder of wounded and prisoners, the systematic and senseless destruction

of the pure masterpieces of immortal Flemish art—all that has lowered the German Army and the Germans to such a level that for generations to come this sea of crimes will cause that infamous people to groan under a load of malediction and contempt.

“The Germans have boasted of having gained to their cause the populations of the South African Union, and specially the Boers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State: but we come here to prove facts which we know through personal knowledge; we come to confound the slander and lies, and—God helping us—the God of Justice and Power—those who yesterday lent an attentive ear to the emissaries of Germany will believe us, because we have come to tell them the truth, and nothing but the truth.

“Belgium makes a last appeal to the conscience of the world; her envoys, apostles of Right and Honour, have gone in all directions, and day by day hesitating neutrals open their arms to them, whilst popular feeling rises and evinces a high enthusiasm for the heroic little nation.

“When I see this immense assembly listening to me all alive with emotion and enthusiasm, I feel, at the threshold of the great country we are about to traverse, how deep a consciousness there is of the beauty of our cause, and of the enormity of the crime perpetrated against us.

“How I thank you, noble citizens of this famous and picturesque city of the Cape, for your deep and overflowing sympathy. If anything can comfort the poor victim of the war, my dear little Belgium, despoiled and crucified, it is to see the heart of the

peoples turn towards her misery and lavish upon her so many affectionate tokens of generosity and admiration.

“When, after our mission in the South African Union, it shall be granted us to return to our dear Belgium, we shall say to our well-beloved King Albert——

*[Here the meeting was interrupted for a few minutes, as the whole audience rose, clapping hands and waving handkerchiefs and hats.]*

“Oh ! how I thank you for this display ! How right you are, for you have acclaimed the bravest among the brave—*[renewed and long applause]*. We shall say to him, we shall say to the Belgian Government, to our dear, brave soldiers who are defending the last remnants of their country with the sublime courage of heroes—*[fresh thunders of applause]*—we shall say how cordial, how overwhelming in its sympathy and generosity, was the reception given here to the envoys of Belgium. That will be as balm to the wounds of all those who grieve and suffer ; and over there, far away on the other side of the seas, among the heaps of ruins of their devastated country, they will bless you and will smile on you.

“Do not think, however, that, if Belgium sends delegates to denounce to the civilized world the barbarity of Germany, to uphold the truth amid lies and slander, and to make known the awful misfortunes of the people, she is prompted by feelings of weariness or faint-heartedness.

“Belgium has not for a moment abandoned her valour and her hope in the future ; and, believe me,

the Belgians in Flanders, rather than abandon the last corner of their country, will resist, if necessary, even to the last man.

“Will the heroism of little Belgium, assisted by her powerful allies, carry her through?”

“At the moment when we landed on your marvellous shores, one of the most eminent statesmen of South Africa sent me his greeting of welcome, and summed up his good wishes for my country in these comforting words of the English poet :

“Shall crime bring crime for ever,  
Strength aiding still the strong ?  
Is it Thy will, O Father,  
That man should suffer wrong ?  
No ! say the mountains, No ! the skies ;  
Man’s clouded sun shall brightly rise  
And songs ascend instead of sighs.”

My colleague, now recovered from his loss of voice, gave, with the aid of some lantern pictures, numerous details on the subject of the atrocities committed in Belgium.

In a masterly address the Administrator of the Cape province, Sir Frederick Waal, sketched broadly the attitude of the British Empire in the European War.

“We are striving,” said he, “first, to safeguard before the world respect of the pledged word, and the inviolability of treaties, which are the basis of European public rights. Besides this, we are striving to preserve the existence and the inalienable rights of small nationalities. We are striving, lastly, against the brutal tendencies of a militarist power that aspires to dominate Europe and the civilization of the world.”

In conclusion the Governor said—

“Messieurs the Delegates, we greet and honour in you the noble nation from which you come, and the great people you represent. The sun of liberty will rise anew upon your country, and when that day comes, Belgium will be re-born, more beautiful and more prosperous than ever. Meanwhile we undertake to assist you with all our power, both now and when you are restored to your country, for at that time your needs will be great indeed.

“Great Britain will be at your side, without faltering, to the end ; she owes it to her engagement and signature ; and more still to the cause of honour and liberty, for she would betray her mission in the world did she allow liberty to be crushed beneath the grievous yoke of ambitious Germany.”

The immense assembly adopted by acclamation the following resolution—

“The assembled citizens of Capetown resolve :

“1. To testify their profound sympathy for the Belgian people in the terrible sufferings endured in consequence of the odious invasion of their territory, overrun without excuse or reason by the German Army.

“2. To express their admiration for King Albert and his army, who have heroically avenged the crime committed against their nation.

“3. To assist by all means in their power, by gifts in money and in kind, the Belgian people, who so admirably maintain their struggle against tyranny.”

Then some one rose to propose the sending of a telegram to King Albert, “expressing boundless



admiration for his bravery and greatness, and the desire to see him soon re-enter in triumph his capital, Brussels."

More cheering followed, more scenes of deep emotion. Some one called for the *Brabançonne*, which was sung by the entire assembly, standing.

Outside in the street, as we got into our motor-car, the people who had not been able to enter the hall for lack of room, made amends by greeting us with vigorous cries of "Hip! hip! hurrah!" whilst they held up their hats and waved them wildly.

## CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS ! Under a star-spangled sky we climb the hillside, at the summit of which a little bell tinkles in timid appeal. The air is mild ; all along the road narcissus, pinks and china asters loom through the darkness of the night, exhaling intoxicating scent odours.

In the humble sanctuary, lighted by candles, a pious crowd is kneeling. Midnight strikes ; the priest, vested in white gold-embroidered silk, mounts the altar steps, and as Mass commences the clear voices of children arise. *Adeste fideles !* They chant the sweet hymn that one hears only at Christmas ; they sing it as in Flanders, as I have heard it every Christmas since my youth, since the distant times when my mother took me through snow and wind to the midnight Mass. *Venite adoremus*, sings a child's voice, timidly and low ; *Venite adoremus*, join in two mezzo-soprani ; *Venite adoremus*, replies in chorus the whole choir of young girls.

There is in these religious ceremonies a world of memories. He who is so happy as to have kept intact the simple faith of childhood, building it up on the foundations of a profound conviction, at hours like this feels his mind filled with an indescribable glow in that fullness of an inner life which the uninitiated neither suspect nor understand.

Now the priest's voice is raised in turn, chanting the words of the Great Night: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax, hominibus bonæ voluntatis.*

*Pax!* and through the large open windows the warm breath of that peaceful night comes to mingle with the incense the sweet perfume of a magnolia in flower.

*Pax!* It is the kiss of Christ, of the Christ who gave all, sacrificed all, even His life, for love of humanity. Why are there men who are not "of goodwill"? Why is Hate stronger than Love? Why must it be, after twenty centuries of Christian civilization, that the ambition which created Satan again creates a being of horror, who sacrifices millions of human lives in a holocaust of pride? The words heard yesterday return to me: "It was a religious people and it fell into idolatry." Pride, self-adoration, idolatry—it is that which has let loose the waves of hate, which has caused rivers of blood to flow. It seems to me that in this humble African chapel, as in all latitudes, there breathes over the assembly communicating at the midnight Mass the same soothing invocation: *Pax!* May peace be born again in the world, may pride be conquered, hate chastened, barbarity suppressed; may sweet and peaceful life be restored to men of goodwill!

The priest blesses the congregation; slowly we return beneath the starry sky, by the flowery roads, among the perfumed thickets; we return with the sweet Christmas hymn sung by the children at the close of the service still ringing in our ears. And I dream of that page of Dom Bruno Destrée: "Christ will put into thy heart an unsuspected love,

banishing pride from thy heart ; He will make thee love all men with a deep and selfless love, in accordance with that divine word, 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.'"

The Administrator of the Cape Province had kindly invited us to dinner, a friendly, informal function. Lady De Waal was as hospitable as it is possible for anyone to be. Her home is a delightful *bon-bonnière* hidden in the midst of high palm trees and thick bamboos. A parrot with gleaming plumage came every now and then and perched on a neighbouring branch, and through the open window asked clearly enough "How are you?"

I found it something of a shock to see on the wall, as I passed into the drawing-room, a water-colour sketch taken from the steps of my house at Bruges, representing a view of the Dyver, with the old Belfry in the background. To find there, in that African drawing-room, a well-known view of the dear old town, in which at the same moment I pictured a sad Christmas, haunted with sadness, poverty, and mental torment, impressed me so strongly that it did not escape the notice of my charming hosts, who regretted this strange chance.

We met that evening some South African Englishmen of good standing. What surprised me in them was the vigour with which they answer "No!" when one says to them "You are English."

In fact, I had been very much struck at the Capetown meeting, by the difference between that great concourse and public meetings in England. Those outbursts of enthusiasm, that keenness, that

loud and spontaneous applause had little in common with the rather cold, reserved and severe character of the meetings in the mother-country. There is a southern touch about the South African Englishman, a desire to be expansive and an excess of affability that pierces the British phlegm. No, they are not English, but South African to the core ; they love their country whole-heartedly.

“Born in Africa,” said one of them, “we have from our earliest infancy been the familiars of her mountains and plains ; it is not surprising if we feel, like all patriots, a deep love for the soil on which we first saw the light. When any of us happen to go to old Europe, we carry Africa with us in our hearts ; even on the summit of the magnificent Alps, we say, ‘This is fine, but Africa is still finer.’ Even at the top of Milan Cathedral, when we look over the wide plains of Lombardy, we say, ‘It is grand, but our far-stretching African plains, with their kopjes glittering in the sun, are grander still.’ When, after long months of absence, the steamer brings us back into Table Bay, a cry of passionate joy escapes our lips ; the negro with shining skin looks at us with happy eyes ; the Afrikaner, bronzed by the warm sun, greets us effusively, and our hearts, beating quickly, say louder than all words : ‘You are a South African !’ There is not one of us who, finding himself abroad, and believing his end to be at hand, would not desire to return here to die and be buried in the land of his birth, under the shadow of the kopjes, in the red sand of Africa.”

“But then,” said I, “have you a feeling of indifference towards England ? are you not united to her by the ties of a far-reaching sympathy ?”

And with the same quickness they replied, "No!" England is the great protecting power, a sovereign guardian which mothers them through her mastery of the sea, and they speak of her with the poetic feeling and keenness which characterize them.

Hear them again—

"Yes, we love England. When we visit for the first time the cradle of our race we tread the English soil in the spirit of piety and respect with which one crosses the threshold of an old cathedral rich in associations. Do we not find there the tombs of our ancestors, of grandparents buried there before the emigration that made us South Africans? Do we not find on English soil names with which we are familiar, which we ourselves bear? Then there are the links that unite our intellectuals with England, where all of them have studied. Even at the close of life those tender bonds formed in the spring-time of life are recalled to memory; the old man sitting on his terrace, smoking his last few pipes of Transvaal tobacco, dreams of *Alma Mater* where, of an evening, sitting round the fire, they discussed with all the eagerness of twenty years the problems of the world's politics. Mantled in fog, London is inseparably bound up with the deepest emotions, the warmest enterprises, the noblest friendships our hearts have ever known. We are South Africans, yes, but sympathies and customs bind us to England by ties that nothing can destroy,—nothing, unless it be an attack upon our independence and liberties, which to us are as dear as our very lives."

Is it not strange, this glimpse into the mind of the South African of English extraction, reasoning

out his attachment to the mother-country, apart from all question of politics, from a purely sentimental and poetic point of view?

We had three meetings on our programme for December 31, the last in the open air at nine o'clock, at Somerset Strand, thirty-eight miles from Capetown.

It was held in a wood close to the sea, with the glorious moon filtering through the colossal boughs of some old, *very* old, eucalyptus trees. The gentle night breezes wafted us the strong perfume of roses, geraniums, hydrangeas and gardenias. In the glade before us were the giant palms with their pure curves, a gigantic parasol pine abruptly raising its flattened shade a shadow against the clear sky, at once graceful and sombre.

The platform was erected under the thin foliage of a forest giant. About us were quite a thousand listeners, seated on chairs or on the grass, the back rows standing in a semi-circle. Here and there, perched upon the branch of a tree, was a Zulu with glistening skin, blacker than the black night, with teeth sparkling like diamonds and eyes shining as with a phosphorescent glow.

The Mayor of Somerset, Mr. Fagan, after lauding Belgium in a charming speech, introduced us to the audience in a novel manner. "On my left," said he, "is Dr. Van der Perre: he is short, and represents Little Belgium. On my left is barrister Standaert: he is tall, and represents Great Belgium." Then, having made his humorous quip, he turned to me and said, "*Het woord is aan den heer Advokaat Standaert*" ("Mr. Standaert has the floor").

I found myself on my feet, being loudly cheered. Then followed a sudden silence in which nothing could be heard but the muffled sound of the waves of the Indian Ocean beating against the rocks close by. I had to speak; I had prepared a speech; I could not remember it, and there was no possibility of referring to my notes in the darkness. The silence was becoming painful—I had to speak.

Suddenly my voice rang through the forest: “Ah! how lovely it is here—how calm, how beautiful! How blessed you are in the peace of this superb night, amidst this wealth of Nature, these perfumed flowers, these exquisite fruits, everything about you speaking of the joy of life, the good fortune of happiness. What a striking image of Peace! This radiant and tranquil night, the clearness of the starry sky, the infinite calm of these shadows, the soft warmth that envelops us, tempered by the sea breeze, the almost enervating feeling of repose, all this magnificent and fruitful nature—no, I cannot imagine any sweetness at all comparable, or more delightful.

“But on the other side of this dream-picture, what looms before me? Over there far, very far, away, I see a corner of the world that I recognize,—it is the land where I was born. I see it enveloped in a vast shroud; there has been snow. At this moment it is cold, it freezes, the wind is keen and biting. That white mantle—horror of horrors!—is stained with huge spots—stained—— No! that is blood, the pure, generous blood of the little Belgian soldier, who has died for his country: the



red blood which, in the clear moonlight, shines with a thousand fires, like ruby red on the pure white of ermine. They lie, our brave Belgians, in the long grave-like trenches. They lie on frozen ground, hard as stone, their eyes alert, weapons in their hands, proudly facing the barbarian who desires to ravish the last clod of their native soil. They lie under the stars which seem to tremble with cold, in a wind that rages and moans through the tall frosted poplars. They lie in the icy, terrible wind, but not one of them trembles ; their limbs are frozen stiff, and yet they are warm, warm at heart, because their hearts are turned passionately towards the most glowing hearth that can warm the heart of man, the sun of liberty."

There followed what I can only describe as an explosion of applause from the audience. This sound recalled me to a sense of reality. I had dreamed aloud. I had let my soul speak under the intense emotion of my surroundings and of the hour. My mother-tongue had broken the warm silence of that African night ; and suddenly, being listened to, and understood, acclaimed by people of all races—even by a Zulu perched aloft, who clapped his hands like a pair of bronzed cymbals—I began to tremble all over. Never had I experienced so strange or disturbing a feeling.

Silence followed, and once again my Flemish words resounded in the depths of the forest. The sufferings of our people, the atrocities of the barbarians, the assassination of women and children, the destruction of the monuments of Flanders, of

all those gems of art that immortalized the Flemish genius—all these were catalogued amid such interruptions as place the audience in the closest touch with the speaker. "*Hoor! Hoor! Schande! Schande!*" they ejaculated. Speaking of our summer nights at home, frequently so beautiful, of the Bell Tower of Malines giving out its aerial concert of divine music, I denounced those wretches who, without any military necessity, bombarded the aged tower containing that marvel, and tried to destroy this priceless treasure along with the old Cathedral. "*Schande! Schande!*" cried the crowd, whose indignant clamour rose in thunderous waves to the lofty tree-tops.

I ended my speech thus: "A few hours ago I was writing to my own people over there in Europe—writing a New Year's letter. In dating the paper I had put Capetown, December 19—, and then I stopped. Why should I again write the date of that terrible year in which we have struggled, and suffered, and wept, more than any other people have struggled, suffered, and wept? I tore the page across, dating a fresh one 'Eve of 1915'—the terrible year will soon have gone for ever—may it fall into oblivion, and with it the hateful militarism of the odious race that has let loose all these horrors.

"1915! I greet you in a fever of burning hope. I have faith in you that you will shine anew upon my beloved corner of Flanders, on my dear Belgium, the morning star of Liberty."

The ovation was enthusiastic; the audience, rising to their feet, clapped me for a long time. When

silence fell at last, a symphony of negroes intoned an almost savage *Brabançonne* which moved me to tears, a very slow, plaintive *Brabançonne* which, wafted along in the peace of that African night, was gently borne away on the sea breeze amid the blended perfume of roses, heliotrope and gardenias.

## CHAPTER VII

THE evening before leaving Capetown we had accepted an invitation to dinner with Mr. X——, a very agreeable and distinguished Member of Parliament, and a great friend of the Belgians.

We set off in a motor-car at about six o'clock in the evening. Our road ran past white rocks, under an azure sky, at the edge of the blue sea. We passed through hills and valleys full of flowers,—wild roses, blue and mauve heather, giant anemones and many-coloured amaryllis. Date trees and forest pines stood out boldly against the horizon. Under the slanting rays of the sun, dazzling in metallic whiteness, was a forest of *silver trees*. One might well take this for an artificial wood, with its trees as tall as poplars and glittering leaves shot with silver. It seemed so strange and improbable that we had to tear off a leaf, to finger it, and break its skin before we could believe in the naturalness of this brilliant metallic decoration shining like steel. By one of those inexplicable tricks of Nature, the Capetown country is one of the few places in the world where this tree, the *Leucadendron argenteum*, is able to live and grow. For more than twenty minutes we traversed in leisurely fashion this delightful copse, which, in the ruddy gleams of the setting sun, took on dull, reddish-brown tints, thus creating

the illusion of a forest of coral. We passed large fields of vines, with their abundant purple grapes, and a grand avenue of old oaks planted by the Dutch. Their branches, joining in Gothic arches, made vaults of green far above our head, while in the distance Table Mountain lifted towards the sky its strange, mysterious summit.

Mr. X—— received us at his home, a charming Dutch villa, the pleasing arrangement of which, the comfort of its furnishing, its impression of ease and the absence of useless or ostentatious luxury, one cannot but admire. The whole house is one made to live in ; there is not a room intended merely for show. One detects in it no stuffiness nor the smell of naphthaline. There is no place in it for vermin. Drawing-rooms are as unknown as coverings on easy-chairs, every corner of the house is meant for normal and daily occupation.

Mrs. X—— received us kindly ; the mistress of a house in Africa is hospitable by nature, she welcomes one simply, without fuss. With her, hospitality is an instinctive virtue that she practises with as much ease as inward satisfaction. The young daughter of the house also greeted us with smiles of pleasure ; she was a typical young South African, pretty, fair, her white skin slightly bronzed, somewhat stout perhaps, but at the same time active and supple. Young South Africa resembles Holland in her figure, and France in her vivacity ; she has a pleasant smile, and so evident a desire to please, that an irresistible atmosphere of sympathy is created around her.

Miss X—— was curious about everything, like a young colonial who conjures up dreams of the old

Europe that she only knows from pictures. She demanded a detailed description of each monument in Flanders that had been destroyed by the barbarians. Charminglly unable to understand our misfortunes, she related how for the past two months she and her friends had been working hard in order to send Christmas presents to three thousand poor little children in Belgium. "Oh!" I said to her, "how I thank you for such a spirit of generosity, which proves that your heart is too noble to grasp what a German is. Those wretches will have kept your Christmas gifts for their own benefit; the Christmas presents of the little children of Belgium have doubtless been the massacre of their father or mother, and for more than one—who knows?—bayonet thrusts through their pretty little frail bodies." I brought, alas! tears into the dark blue eyes of the young girl, who said to me, shaking her head, "No, sir, I cannot understand that."

Dinner was served, in the full sense of the term, for everything was on the table—a broad table of surprisingly ample size. The hot dishes included leg of mutton, beef, and *salmis* under large metal covers; the cold fare included bread-crumbed cutlets, salmon in aspic, chicken *chaud-froid*, scarlet lobsters, pastries, various jellies of different colours, pineapples, grapes, golden melons, purple grana-dillas, bronze custard apples. One might liken it in all the realism of its brilliant colouring and contrasts of light and shade to a picture by Jordaens of luxurious banquets, replete with dishes of sweet-meats and fruit. And was it not a revelation to find realized there, in the home of a conservative Dutchman in this distant colony, that Pantagruel-

like vision which one believed sprang entirely from the imagination of a genial painter ?

The following day, as we were leaving, we found assembled at the railway station the Mayor, the General's aide-de-camp, the Administrator's secretary, the Consuls of Belgium and France, the Dean of Capetown and numerous friends of the day before, come to bid us good-bye.

We took possession of a *wagon-lit* obligingly put at our disposal, and which, attached or detached at pleasure, became our moving home for many weeks. It had two sleeping compartments, with wardrobe and cupboards ; a room serving as both saloon and dining-room ; a kitchen ; a bath-room, and a baggage-room. In attendance were a French cook—an excellent fellow, but exceedingly loquacious—and a coloured man, half saffron, half copper, a blend of chocolate and lemon, with an unpronounceable name, whom we at once named "Cocoa." He was a sort of stage buffoon, who played us any amount of tricks, though he was devoted, punctual, and honest to a degree that atoned for many faults.

This prolonged journey on the railway, in overheated carriages, with joltings day and night, in a country with slow and difficult communications, was very fatiguing. Only those who have been through it know the depressing effect of a tropical country. Still, we got good results, and that was the important point.

Our first stopping-place was Worcester, where we were to arrive in the evening. The train travelled through brilliant foliage and flower-laden bushes. From time to time we got a view of Table Mountain

and its companions, always with the same scenic effect. Then there was the exuberant agricultural land, the light corn, bluish lucerne, vistas of maize with straight, thick, golden spikes, vine branches heavy with grapes, vast fields of rosy, plump melons.

After many hours of this the wild country appeared, covered with cactus and aloes, illimitable virgin soil with latent energies, waiting for the hand of man to make produce spring from its fruitful bosom.

We reached Worcester at nine o'clock in the evening, having made our arrangements for passing the night in the train. I was reading the poetry of Guido Gezelle—a Christmas present Mr. Merriman had given me at Capetown—when Cocoa invaded the compartment, and in monkey-like fashion pointed with the forefinger of his right hand to each of the fingers of the left, as if wishing to enumerate something he could not calculate in full. I guessed that he was announcing the Mayor of the place and his suite.

This explains how I came to stay that evening at the house of a charming Boer—a man six feet high, with a hearty handshake, who offered his guest the choice of a bedroom, or of a mat spread on the verandah—for our European climate affords but a faint idea of the heat, which is just as bad in the night. The whole of the Boer family—in pyjamas—slept in the open air; as for me, I chose indoors, and slept like a dormouse—in winter.

Breakfast was at half-past eight. There is always the same abundance of good cheer on Boer tables :



mutton cutlets, veal *sautés*, fried fish, bowls of cream, avalanches of fruit—strawberries, apricots, peaches—everything within reach, every one helping himself as he pleases. After the head of the house has said grace, the tempting fare is attacked with hearty appetite. Breakfast over, the Boer takes his short *siesta* on the verandah, smoking his pipe filled with “magalie,” the delicious tobacco of the Transvaal.

Thirty-two miles from Worcester lives the Parliamentary representative of the district, who invited us to dine with the chief people of the place. We motored through a glory of palms, grenadines, and superbly flowering aloes, with blue and green parrots flying around us, craggy mountains of novel and strange outlines bounding the horizon. At the end of an hour's fast driving we reached their stern and arid summits. It was a ravishing picture we then commanded, an immense oasis of verdure and flowers, a delightful valley at the foot of a circle of high rocks, like some giant emerald set in bronze; this was the agricultural establishment of the member for Worcester. The chief product is the “sultana” which produces the dry raisins that are the delight of the European *gourmets*; the fruit is dried and packed on the farm itself. Maize also is grown and lucerne, and shut in by the rocks are large pastures, wherein the cattle roam freely. In front of the dwelling, venerable trees cover the wide *perron* with their shade, and a garden contains a hundred different flowers of brilliant colouring, which give the effect of mosaic.

At table, after grace had been said by the host,

a bare-armed negro removed the great silver bell-shaped covers, magician-like, exposing stuffed fowls, smoking turkeys, and a white salmon, to be followed by strawberry jellies and tempting tarts. Then came the "water-melon," and with this there was almost a ceremony. On a large silver dish, a superb piece of plate, brought, no doubt, from Holland by some ancestor, the negro magician brought a spindle-shaped melon of tremendous size and weight. This monster was placed upon a special table. The master of the house rose, and after removing the two ends of the spindle with a large knife, cut deeply, length-wise, into the green, white-veined skin. The mass opened, and enormous slices of blood-red flesh spotted with white pips were put upon the plates of the guests, who had been watching the operations with considerable interest. Opposite to me at table, a charming little girl of fourteen years disappeared entirely behind her slice. How we enjoyed ourselves revelling in the fresh fruit; tongues wagged discreetly, a beatific gurgle circulated from guest to guest.

O Rabelais ! that I had thy art, the richness of thy language, worthily to express the delight of tasting an African "water-melon" !

It was especially at meetings of this kind, in the midst of notabilities, that we had the advantage of hearing different opinions on the subject of Belgium and the lies spread abroad regarding our country. It was then that we discovered the principal arguments which we should develop at the next public meetings. Thus we were frequently placed *tête-à-tête* with pronounced opponents, tenacious Germano-

philes who parted from us with a sincere confession of the error into which they had fallen.

On our return we visited a Hottentot village. These people are almost disappearing from the territory of the Union; they are hideously ugly, stunted, yellow—a brownish yellow—flat-nosed, with thin hair, weak sunken eyes, and a flabby look—the dried-up, almost extinct, branch of a race that was formerly not without its good points. I thought, rather sadly, that on the whole there was a more intelligent and a freer look about the huge monkey we saw a few days before in the park of an elderly lady at whose house we breakfasted in the interval between two meetings.

The meeting at Worcester was a complete success; there were crowds everywhere, even as far as the middle of the street, before the open doors, up to the platform itself, on which my colleague and I had hardly room to move. And the temperature! It seemed to me at certain moments that I was swimming, that my gestures cleft the waves of an opaque heat. These gesticulations left us in a state of exhaustion fortunately counterbalanced by the splendid enthusiasm with which the audience acclaimed our valiant little Belgium.

We had the same temperature and a similar success at Tulbagh, where we were the guests of Sir Meiring Beck, an accomplished gentleman, one of the leaders in the Senate of the Union. He has an exquisite residence, where smiling and hospitable Lady Beck did the honour of her old home, *de oude drostdy*, an old Dutch hotel, containing much valuable wainscoting. As we entered

the large dining-room, panelled in oak, and ornamented with antique Venetian glass lustres, a gramophone played the *Brabançonne*. The richly-covered table was ornamented with a mass of little Belgian flags.

After dinner I asked permission of the young lady of the house, a *virtuoso* of great talent, to escort her to the piano. "On condition," said she, "that I do not play German music?" "There are," I replied, "so many flowers that have no thorns." Moved by a charming inspiration, she struck up "Peer Gynt," by Grieg, that admirable tale of despair, of sorrow, and of hope. She threw into it the truly passionate force of her artistic soul, and when she had played the final chords, tears were in her eyes as well as in my own. On the fields of carnage, where the savage bloody dance of the Treitschkes and Bernhardis is being held our thoughts and minds had met, and vibrated with the same shudder of tragic anguish and reviving hope.

We had been told that we should find a public hard to please at Tulbagh. The people were pro-German and accustomed to manifesting their opinions freely and noisily. We had the joy of seeing them unanimously, and whole-heartedly, denounce the Germans and acclaim Belgium. A singular thing happened; when Senator Meiring Beck, who presided, proposed the closing of the meeting by singing "God save the King," according to tradition, some people left the hall, by way of abstention. They are decidedly hot-headed, the people of Tulbagh: our success in having brought them to denounce the Kaiser was only the more significant;

it was, moreover, much commented on throughout the country.

A luncheon in the dining-room of the *oude drostdy* brought together all the leading people of the neighbourhood, about thirty guests; this afforded us an opportunity of refuting, even in minute detail, certain misapprehensions with regard to Belgium's attitude.

I note here, as an example, and to draw attention to its touching words, the prayer offered up by the pastor of Tulbagh before beginning luncheon. The text of this prayer I wrote out the same evening.

“Lord, All Powerful and Eternal, we thank you for having led into the paths of our humble city, and to this hospitable dwelling, these distinguished travellers. They are the envoys of a small country, in which has suddenly been revealed to us a great people, whose valour and epic struggle for right and liberty history will record. Deign, O Lord, to bless these beloved guests, their fellow citizens, and their illustrious King, and guide their steps to the end, even to a return to their Fatherland, and to freedom from an unjust and cruel yoke. Meanwhile we humbly submit to the decrees of your Providence, and pray you, Lord, to bless the food of which we are about to partake; that it may be the bread of strength that will sustain and confirm our eminent Belgian guests in their noble mission. Amen!”

Whilst delivering the prayer the pastor stood, the rest also were standing with reverently bowed heads. In the important centres there is always a chaplain attached to the headquarters, and it is he

who, at the invitation of the Mayor, says the prayer, even in the presence of highly-placed clergy. The terms of these prayers often moved us very much, and both we and other guests have felt stirred by them to our inmost soul.

The train had been rolling along all night, and I was sleeping soundly when I felt myself shaken. I opened my eyes, and Cocoa was before me, bearing on a tray a cup of coffee and a biscuit. It is the custom of the country; the Afrikaner never thinks of leaving his bed before a man or woman of colour has served him his hot coffee, accompanied by some little dainty. For the fifth time I endeavoured to make the boy understand that I did not intend to give way to this indulgence. He did just the same thing next morning, and the following days. Suddenly the train stopped; Cocoa fell to the ground, he and his tray, and laughed heartily as he picked himself up, and removed the broken china.

Here is the little picture which, during the halt, filled the window frame: a green hill, of very delicate tint, with two aloes springing up from it straight and tall, their blossoming stems shining like cadmium. A long-legged ostrich advances, picking about with jerky motions of neck and beak. Some young negroes, who at that early hour are quite naked, are doing athletic exercises, and turning head over heels. A fat negress, in a yellow bodice and red skirt—has she sported them in honour of the Belgian Mission?—is leading two fat, shorn sheep to pasture. In the foreground is a large shrub covered with huge violet flowers, forming a bouquet of vivid and almost blinding colour.

We alighted at Wellington, where, during the twelve hours that we stayed there, the Mayor found means of arranging seven speeches, five meals and two meetings. The country is one of grand beauty. At Tulbagh the landscape had reminded us of the pretty Norwegian fjelds; here we were in quite an Alpine zone, the glory of snow replaced by a vesture of tropical luxuriance, all alive and brilliant.

After the first afternoon meeting, at which we had a hundred and fifty listeners, we set out for higher ground, where a second meeting had been arranged, consisting of a large number of mountain folk and holiday makers. A string of motor-cars led the way, the last one, under the care of the Town Clerk, containing the repast, to be served at ten o'clock by moonlight in a wood. We ascended about six thousand feet through a veritable Eden, with fields of vines, maize, peach trees, apricots, melons, and pine-apples, the richest and best that lavish Nature can bestow. We proceeded by winding roads through this land of promise, from which we emerged at last to command a view of the whole, and contemplate in a single sweep the spectacle of its fertility. We climbed into regions still green, but devoid of habitations, trees and flocks. "Here," said my neighbour, "we are in the kingdom of the leopard and the jackal."

"And do not these rather undesirable guests somewhat disturb you?" I asked. "They do," he replied, "a great deal of harm to the cattle; but we ourselves have nothing to fear from them. They do not like motor-cars, besides"—touching his coat-pocket—"we always carry a Browning."

At that moment we commanded the circle of rocks forming the natural enclosure of this earthly paradise,—a triple circle of mountains rising higher and higher, the last of which bounds the horizon, their crenelated or pointed summits outlined against the sky. As the sun went down there fell upon this triple range of valleys a flood of colour, a softness of light and shade, a Raphaelesque picture that thrilled me with its sublimity.

At eleven o'clock, as we got into our carriage at the station, the Mayor of Wellington made us a parting speech.

At Oudtshoorn, an important centre situated in the midst of a pretty, mountainous district, the Mayor and Municipal Council met us at the railway station and conducted us to the hotel, where rooms had been taken for us, and where the national Belgian flag was hoisted the moment we arrived.

But here trouble of a new kind threatened us. To the overpowering heat, the fatigue of travelling by night and day, emotions renewed at all the meetings, was added a superabundance of receptions, teas, picnics, luncheons, and banquets. Our first successes had created throughout the Cape such a rivalry of enthusiasm for the Belgian Mission that it was quite impossible to attend all the demonstrations, and it was a great disappointment to these friendly people if we could not do honour to the receptions which they had for some days past been preparing. It became necessary to adopt the plan of asking the Town Clerk in each locality to send us a list of receptions, so that we might cut out—often with the deepest regret—three, four, or



even five items of the programme in order to reduce it to the number that our jaded and overwrought physique was capable of undertaking.

There was not a reception, not even a tea, without a cordial speech, to which we had to respond. From the Cape to the banks of the Limpopo the toasting mania is inveterate. Here, for instance, is what was printed on the menu of a banquet given by the Mayor of Oudtshoorn to the Belgian delegates at the Town Hall—

#### LIST OF TOASTS

1. H.M. The King . . . *The President.*
2. H.M. The King of the  
Belgians . . . . . *The President.*
3. The Governor General *The President.*
4. Our Guests . . . . . *Mr. J. Schoemann.*
5. Reply by the Belgian Delegates.
6. Our Allies . . . . . *Mr. F. Rose.*
7. Reply. . . . . *Ven. Archdeacon Atkinson.*

The meeting at the Oudtshoorn Theatre was an imposing affair. Twelve hundred people, assembled from all parts of the district, formed an excited and enthusiastic crowd. One needs to be somewhat accustomed to this kind of audience, as the sympathy of the public and the speaker manifests itself somewhat noisily. At an interesting passage cries of *Hoor! Hoor!* coming from a score of places at once; at the recital of this or that atrocity committed by the Germans, shouts of *Schande! Schande!* interrupt the speaker, with a rumbling sound like the growl of thunder. It was amid an uninterrupted concert of *Hoor! Hoor!* and loud cheers

punctuating each sentence, that the Mayor, at the end of the meeting, read the following resolution—

“The inhabitants of the town and district of Oudtshoorn assembled in public meeting, express their sincere thanks to Messieurs Standaert and Van der Perre, for their visit as delegates from the noble King Albert, charged to make known the truth on the subject of the treatment accorded to their country and people. They express to the delegates, also to His Majesty the King and to the people of Belgium, their most profound sympathy in this hour of cruel trial and oppression, under the yoke of a brutal and heartless enemy. They express their sincere hope that, with the help of God and her powerful allies, Belgium may soon be delivered from her barbarous invader, and regain that condition of peace and prosperity of which it has set an example to the world.”

The next day, escorted by the Mayor and members of the Town Council, we visited the Grottos of “Cango,” situated in a country where the winding road runs through patches of astonishingly picturesque landscape. The Grottos are very interesting, though rather difficult of approach; the crystal hall, especially, drips with moisture. But I believe only the first of them have been discovered, and that further exploration will not fail to bring to light some marvellous caves calculated to rival the domed hall of the Hau Grottos, and the famous Calvary of the Caves of Adelsberg.

We left Oudtshoorn at four o'clock in the afternoon: all the officials were at the station, accom-

panied by a large crowd come to greet and cheer us. The train was already moving off amid cries of *Leve Belgie*, when, looking into the interior of our saloon carriage, we found it filled with flowers and fruit sent anonymously by kind people to whom it was impossible for us to return our thanks. We telegraphed to the Mayor begging him to make public our gratitude to the population of Oudts-hoorn for their memorable reception of us.

## CHAPTER VIII

AFTER twenty hours of railway travelling, which was equal to the same length of time spent in a Turkish bath, we had just arrived at the Royal Hotel, Uitenhage, when the Town Clerk, alert and cheerful, came to submit the programme of our visit.

I read the following—

### “VISIT OF THE BELGIAN MISSION TO UITENHAGE.

#### SATURDAY.

- At 11 a.m. Reception at the station by the authorities.  
„ Noon. Visit to the Charity Bazaar for the Belgian Relief Fund.  
„ 1.30 p.m. Quiet Luncheon at the Royal Hotel.  
„ 3 „ Tea at Despatch, with the Belgian Vice-Consul at Port Elizabeth (20 mile motor drive).  
„ 6.30 „ Dinner given by the Mayor.  
„ 8.30 „ Mass Meeting at the Drill Hall.

#### SUNDAY.

- At 9 a.m. Religious Services.  
„ 11 „ Tea with the President of the Chamber of Commerce.  
„ Noon. Motor Drive.

SUNDAY (*continued*).

- At 1.30 p.m. Dinner with Mr. Garcia, President of the Provincial Council.
- „ 3 „ By Motor-car—Visit to the Irrigation Reservoirs at Boinville (40 miles).
- „ 5 „ Tea at the Kerkbosch Hotel.
- „ 6 „ Visit to irrigated farms.
- „ 8 „ Supper at Harvey's Hotel, Addo.
- „ 10 „ Return to the Royal Hotel. Tea.

## MONDAY.

- At 8.30 a.m. Excursion to the Fountains (12 miles). Breakfast in the open air, provided by the District Council.
- „ 10 „ Visit to the Ostrich Farms.
- „ 1.30 p.m. Luncheon given by the Mayor.
- „ 4 „ Departure of the Belgian Mission for Graaf Reinet.”

I had my pencil in hand, ready to cross out one or another item ; I could do nothing. I was on the point of begging for at least one hour, an hour to walk about unknown, smoking a cigar, to look through shop windows, to poke my nose into old book-shops, buy some post-cards, choosing them at leisure. It was no good. The thermometer stood at a hundred and seven degrees in the shade at Uitenhage, and that is a temperature which compels resignation.

There was only one street to traverse in order to reach the Charity Bazaar by noon. I felt as if I were walking on foot-warmers ; the fronts of the houses glowed with heat, and a thunderstorm of

driving, penetrating rain broke in the great avenue. Our presence had attracted many people to the bazaar,—an interested crowd, curious to see us at close quarters, and to shake hands with us ; a crowd deserving of all praise for having braved this terrific heat. There were many English people, with well-filled purses, who gave generously on behalf of “gallant little Belgium.”

Every one was dressed in white, and the daintily dressed stall-holders sold little flags with the Belgian colours, and chocolate—in a melting condition. People clamoured for steaming tea, which seemed almost a refreshment. My colleague and I had much trouble in thanking the ladies and young girls for their admirable devotion towards our dear compatriots ; it was easy to observe the emotion they felt as they pressed our hands, the hands of a Belgian, a representative of that noble little nation for whom their hearts thrilled with the most generous feelings. But in spite of their emotion, the greater number did not forget to produce a book, large or small, demanding with a smile, “Your signature ! Will you, please ?” It was impossible to vary the formula amid so many requests, and so I wrote the same words in all cases, “Remember little Belgium,” with date and signature, which these noble-hearted children carried away as a reward, a very treasure.

Twenty-five miles from Uitenhage is situated the country house of Mr. Holland, the Belgian Vice-Consul at Port Elizabeth, where he has the management of a vast and interesting import and export house. Active, intelligent, amiable, he is one of those people—too rare, alas !—who take up voluntary

work whole-heartedly, and devote themselves zealously to the interests of Belgium. Whatever Africa can supply in the way of agricultural and forest products was quickly brought to our notice during our visit to Despatch. Eight years ago, when Mr. and Mrs. Holland first settled there, they found nothing but cactus, sand and rock, a stretch of sterile acres, bought for a few shillings. To-day there is a wooded park, in which are displayed all the flora of Europe and Africa, a profusion of flowers that pursues one like a dream, a vast agricultural establishment, rich pastures wherein graze large numbers of cattle, fields of lucerne, corn, maize, vines laden with grapes, abundant fig-trees, an orchard yielding large and luscious fruit. What astonished us was the extraordinarily rapid development of everything that grows. A certain amount of initiative and understanding are sufficient to obtain these results; irrigation and that scorching sun which is now tanning our skin do the rest.

Mrs. Holland received us gracefully in her pretty home, with wide verandahs beautified by foliage and flowers. The interior of the house breathes comfort and good taste. Works of art abound without being too crowded; no richly-coloured picture overpowers the light and delicate water-colours, no heavy bronze overshadows the exquisite delicacy of the Satsuma.

From nine to eleven at night we held a very fine meeting. We had an audience of thirteen hundred, with seating accommodation for only eight hundred. All made themselves as slim as possible to give room to new arrivals, and the lobbies showed

an indescribable gift of elasticity. As for the temperature, it was torrid ; the northerner has no conception of such heat. Yet one does not feel so completely exhausted as during the dog days at home ; one breathes easily and there is plenty of air. True, speaking in public was exhausting, but at the moment it hardly seemed so, and the surrounding heat appeared to communicate itself to our discourse. One little incident occurred. I had been warned that some pro-Germans would probably try to disturb the meeting. There were fifteen of them seated at the back of the hall ; early in the meeting, seeing the packed condition of the audience, and the uselessness of any effort to oppose the general feeling, they rose all together, looking furious, and went out without a word.

While taking us back to our hotel, the Mayor said how pleased he was by the result of the meeting, and added, "It has been a magnificent day for the Belgian Relief Fund !"

The Press gave particulars of the meeting in the most eulogistic terms, under a heading in large type : "An Historic Evening."

I cannot resist reproducing here, in part, at least, an open letter that appeared in a local paper, three days after our departure from Uitenhage. Unfortunately, the translation destroys the flavour of the Afrikaner text, in which were blended the frankness and roughness, sentiment and good common sense, which characterize the Boer.

"TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS.

"SIRE,—The Afrikaners are citizens, all equal before the law, and they attach little importance to



titles and grandeur. There is, moreover, only One Majesty before whom they bow the knee, and He is neither your peer nor the peer of the heads of nations, whether enemy or allied. We honour a high position when he who occupies it is truly worthy of it. And you are worthy in truth to be King of the Belgians, not because of your birth, but because of your conduct. We are well aware that there is only left for you to reign over a small corner of your kingdom; but as you have lost village after village, town after town, and district after district, so you have gradually risen in our estimation. And had you lost the last inch of your territory you would remain all the same what you were, for you are not the King of Belgium, but King of the Belgians. Your throne is in the hearts of your subjects, and at a time when the last are in the enemy's power, or dispersed in foreign lands, your throne is the better assured, since the gift of hearts is all the more spontaneous. In the enthusiasm of the Belgians for you there cannot at this moment be either flattery or hypocrisy. That your people love you as much now that you are fighting desperately on the field of battle, that they think more of you than when you were *baas* in your palace, is for us a proof that your dignity as man is even higher than your dignity as king. That is why, in this day of adversity and sorrow, the Boers of distant Africa, who see in men not titles but merits, respectfully extend their hand to you. We have the most profound respect for a king like you, we honour ourselves in honouring you.

"The day before yesterday, Your Majesty, we met here, to the number of a full thousand,—here

in this little African village, of which you have never heard, for it is smaller than the least of your towns that have been demolished or burnt. We were met together in such large numbers to hear two foreigners speak. They were two of your subjects, sent by you, to make known to us the crimes committed against your people, to tell us about the ruins heaped up in Belgium, and to denounce the authors of these misdeeds. At the recital of these atrocities all of us had tears in our eyes, for more than most people we know what suffering is, we who have suffered so much. We have read many tales in newspapers, but all wars bring their own cruelties, and many things are printed that are not true. But we have listened to those whom you have sent to us. With a sincerity that cannot be mistaken they have borne witness to the truth : not one of us doubts their word, however terrible the facts revealed. Our hearts, Your Majesty, have thrilled with indignation in unison with the hearts of your envoys ; the horrible scenes that they have brought before our eyes, and which literally haunt us, seem, alas ! like a frightful reality.

“Some people here, being hostile to England, sympathize with Germany because she is the enemy of the English. They wish to take the part of the murderers of your wives and children, the destroyers of your works of art, your churches, and wonderful monuments. They say, shrugging their shoulders, ‘Why did not the Belgians let the Germans pass through when they were offered such fine indemnities?’

“But your delegates, Sire, have opened the blinded eyes, have shown in triumphant fashion

that, so far from dishonouring you, it was your duty to oppose the Germans, even at the cost of the utmost sacrifice. That is why we admire you so much to-day. All honour to you and to your people,—you were great enough to choose the terrible, blood-stained path that was for you the path of honour.

“Thousands of your soldiers have fallen on the field of battle : that sacrifice is not lost. Thousands of your subjects have been assassinated, their property stolen, their houses burnt : that sacrifice is not lost. Over those dead, and those material ruins, you have given this lesson to the universe,—that civilization cannot be founded on the abuse of might, on injustice and perjury.

“There is something very sacred to a nation—the integrity of its honour and its reputation in the world and before posterity. If injustice should reign triumphant, history will say that it was at the cost of the noble blood of the most noble little nation. Sire, you have held aloft the honour of Belgium, and along with it the honour of humanity.

“But from iniquity for the moment triumphant will be born justice for you and for others ; and to have suffered for justice, Your Majesty, showed greatness in you and your people. You are not at the end of your sufferings : famine, devastation, horrors of all kinds will test you still further.

“But hold firm, Sire, until the divinely appointed hour. Justice will conquer.”

It was profoundly affecting for us to discover at every step that our mission was arousing in the breasts of African people the noblest and most

generous passions that can move the human soul. Ah ! how proud one felt of being a Belgian !

At nine o'clock in the morning three motor-cars came to take us to High Mass ; the Mayor and members of the Corporation bore us company, the greater part of them assisting for the first time in their lives at a religious service in a Roman Catholic church. The *cure*, surrounded by his church-wardens, received us under the porch, which was decorated with the national colours of Belgium, and conducted our little band to the choir of the church. After the Gospel there was a touching address on the text "Happy are they that suffer for righteousness' sake." A choir of children singing in unison rendered the plain-song Mass very finely. The offertory, for the benefit of the war victims, amounted to fifteen pounds. At the conclusion of the service, as the priest escorted us towards the door, the organ broke forth in the *Brabançonne*. Those accompanying us were impressed by the beauty of the religious service ; and one of them, the following day, spoke for a long time about the indelible impression made on him by the Catholic ceremonial.

The reception at the house of the President of the Provincial Council was of the most cordial description. Mrs. Garcia and her smiling young daughters understand so thoroughly the graceful art of hospitality, that once more I came away hardly knowing whether they or we were under obligation to the other.

Our expedition *en automobile* was one of those wild drives of which Africans are fond. In Africa the motor-car marks an evolution in life. If

the vehicle with sixteen oxen remains the mode of travelling preferred by the Boer, because he likes to carry with him his bedding, his provisions, his home, the modern car has become the general method of locomotion for short trips of about a hundred or a hundred and thirty miles, out and home. One day, at Cradock, we were drinking tea with a Boer, and as we fell in with his suggestion that we should visit his farm, he ordered his car, which took us, without regard to route or roads, across the twenty thousand acres of his property.

Motor-cars are not manufactured in the country ; the greater number come from America, there are only a few with the Belgian mark, F. N. There is a considerable opening for this branch of industry worthy of attracting all the attention of our firms, which, by the bye, should contrive to become better acquainted with the commercial methods of the Boers. The motor-car, on account of the great distances travelled, and rough usage, quickly wears out in Africa. Some farmers mentioned three years as a maximum life ; the market, then, should offer continuous business.

The good Mayor of Uitenhage led the dance, from three o'clock in the afternoon till eleven at night. This was a strange excursion,—the motor-car driven at full speed, leaving roads and paths, and traversing fields and hills, valleys and streams. It had rained during the night, and when it has rained in this country, which is poorly supplied with bridges, one never knows where one will get to, or if it will be possible to return by the same way that one came. Bounding, leaping, bumping,

the car devoured space,—a space undefined and stony, where the cactus and spekboom hold undisputed sway, together with serpents, tigers, and elephants. Of these last there are in the immediate neighbourhood more than three hundred. On turning into an avenue we met a young negress, slim and tall, extremely black, the whites of her eyes and the enamel of her teeth forming a striking contrast with her ebony skin. Doubtless she had not dreamed of meeting any one and had entirely forgotten to dress herself. She greeted us quite innocently.

High up on a rocky mass, with splashes of bright red, and festooned with green lichen, is a great dam which retains the water for distribution where needed. Irrigation is the great source of agricultural prosperity in this country, it assures to the crops an almost unlimited fertility. The farms we visited are magnificent. One of them belongs to the Marist Brotherhood which has an educational establishment at Uitenhage, where there are a hundred and fifty pupils. In its excellently kept farm, thanks to irrigation, the Marist Brotherhood reaps in a single year about seven successive crops of lucerne. We saw another farm where the harvest of maize and grapes promised to be marvellous; the Boer owner, who had invited his neighbours, received us at coffee in his home, and addressed us in a well-turned speech. I noted in the *salon* a Japanese screen of excellent taste, some proofs of a rare and ancient engraving, tiger-skins tastefully arranged on the floor, and some Dutch chests of a kind to make me dream, poor amateur that I am.

At ten o'clock we rolled through the darkness under a sky glittering with stars. Some hares came out and played in the glare of our headlights. From time to time something bounded across our path. Strange birds rose in a heavy flight, raising harsh screams of terror in the calm, warm dampness of this African night.

The districts of Oudtshoorn and Uitenhage are ostrich-breeding centres. We visited several farms, one of which counted more than two thousand ostriches. They scampered in front of us, a little galloping train, tripping it like *ballerinas* at a fair, with their long sturdy legs, the little-clump of black and white feathers behind raised at each step. The head at the top of the long neck is rather foolish-looking ; every few moments down it goes to crop the grass, and it gives a serpentine movement to the long throat. The Boer has a great liking for the ostrich, because it requires little attention, and a minimum of manual labour. Rearing it is simple. A space with a dry and grassy soil and enclosed within a double row of iron wire is chosen. But the product of the ostrich is an article subject to the fluctuations of fashion. Many farmers have locked up almost all their capital in this fancy, and that is a mistake. I think, not without a certain emotion, of many excellent Boers whom the war must bring to the brink of ruin. Ostriches are often enormously costly, and whilst many are worth no more than thirty pounds apiece, others, choice birds, sell for four hundred and even eight hundred pounds per head. The difference of value in ostrich feathers is surprising ; the large white plumes of the best quality are sold by weight,

at prices ranging from thirty-two to forty-eight pounds the pound, whilst plumes of the second quality are sold at eight pounds the pound. As for the black plumes, the best are worth only twenty pounds. I quote, be it understood, average prices, subject to numerous market fluctuations, and merely to give some figures to those—particularly ladies—whom the matter interests. The white plumes of the greatest value are generally square both at the tip and at the base, the point being scarcely perceptible; and they are curly and very fluffy. Ostrich fanciers speak enthusiastically about their breeds of birds. It appears that no two feathers of the ostrich resemble one another, and several farmers have told me they could recognize among a thousand a feather coming from their own farm. The finest feathers are taken from the wing of the male; the crop is gathered every ten months. Nowadays they cut the feathers instead of pulling them out, which fact relieves the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of considerable anxiety. The ostrich is not an ill-tempered bird; at certain times of the year, however, when the male swaggers about with endless courtings and a thousand comic graces in front of his companions, one should not get in his way. With one straight and strong blow of his claws he is able to strike a man to the ground.

To give an idea of the importance of ostrich-breeding, and the part it plays in the economic and agricultural activity of South Africa, I add figures showing the values of ostrich feathers exported, sold chiefly in London.



## VALUE OF EXPORT

In 1908 . . . .	£1,738,392
„ 1910 . . . .	2,272,846
„ 1912 . . . .	2,609,366
„ 1914 . . . .	2,953,587

You see, then, that two millions sterling is well passed by the annual yield of the ostrich, but ostrich breeders alone among agriculturists will specially feel the effects of the war; it would be a stroke of good luck for them if, on the day of victory, all the ladies in the great allied countries wore ostrich feathers in their hats.

Violently rocked by the jolting of the train I was lying asleep in the narrow drawer that formed my berth when Cocoa came and shook me, telling me, as well as he could, that in twenty minutes we should be at Kimberley. At six o'clock to the minute, I found myself at the doorway ready to confront a reception of a somewhat unreal character, owing to the early hour. The train stopped in the spacious station and, to my great surprise, there were waiting on the platform the Mayor of Kimberley, his secretary, and some other personages, amongst them a Belgian who came from Liège, and, like all his fellow-townsmen, was an amiable fellow. He has kept up excellent relations with the country, chiefly through journalism. The Mayor cordially bade me welcome, expressing his regret that my colleague, who had gone to Aliwal North, was not at my side, and offered me the hospitality of his house, saying, that, if only I took full advantage of the invitation, Kimberley would still be in my debt.

After breakfast I found myself for an hour alone, like one escaped from school, striding over the famous diamond-bearing soil.

Kimberley! Forty years ago it was a desert of barren, desolate rocks, where once a missionary passing through had found a kopje, a wild fig-tree, and an equally wild Bushman family. To-day there is a thriving town, with picturesque streets, well-stocked shops, wealthy inhabitants—a metamorphosis as astonishing as that which converted that shapeless, hard rock into a diamond. It was in 1872 that a Minister of the Cape showed in Parliament a great diamond he had just found—"the Star of South Africa," now the property of the Countess of Dudley—exclaiming, "Here is the rock on which we will build the fortune of South Africa." At the present moment the rocks of Kimberley yield ninety per cent. of the world's production of diamonds. Those extracted here have an annual value of five millions sterling.

Accompanied by interesting guides I traced the astonishing evolution of this fortunate city. I saw where, after the first discoveries, the immigrants crowded together: they still preserve the wooden huts, the birthplaces of some famous millionaires. I inquired after the whereabouts of the famous kopje. The kopje had disappeared under the pick-axe of the first prospectors, the fig-tree that flourished under its shade is withered; as for the Bushman, at the sight of so many white faces he ran away, and perhaps is running still. The flood of prospectors, smitten with the diamond fever, grew from day to day; they arrived in hundreds, they arrived in thousands. At the end of eight months there were

fifty thousand encamped on the desert rock, dying of hunger and thirst, fascinated by the diamond-strewn land.

Old Mynheer de Beer, proprietor of this heap of stones which had never given the least return, was so fortunate as to sell it for five thousand pounds. The block, unproductive then, is to-day estimated at a market value of at least thirty million pounds. The great company that works the diamonds was not ungrateful, for it assumed the name of Mynheer de Beer, and thus assured him of immortality. This was the company which, under the influence of Cecil Rhodes, the humble clergyman's son, the modest Natal farmer, himself attracted by the diamond lure, effected the fusion of the small mines that had been formed at Kimberley. I saw at the offices of the De Beers Company the cheque representing the price of the fusion, paid to the "Mines of Kimberley Society"; this cheque, which is unique in banking annals, is drawn for the sum of £5,338,650. This fusion of the various enterprises of diamond production had for its end checking the depreciation of the product and maintaining the average grade of the quantities of diamonds thrown annually upon the market.

We suddenly saw before us an immense yawning gulf that opened like a funnel to a depth of twelve hundred feet. This is, I am told, the largest hole ever made by the hand of man. The diameter at the surface is sixteen hundred feet; you walk a mile while going round it. This enormous bowl crater gives an instant impression of the simplicity of the diamond industry. Along its sides can be distinguished amongst the rocky mass broad streaks

of earth. This is the greyish-blue sand which contains the precious stones,—the diamond-laden soil. All that is necessary is to take some clods of this earth and to sift it; the diamond remains in the sieve. At the bottom of the giant funnel there are tunnels where exploratory work is carried on. Three thousand European *employés* and sixteen thousand negroes work in the Kimberley mines. The natives are engaged for three months, during which time they may not leave the enclosure, wherein they remain prisoners without possible communication with the exterior. As can easily be understood, the great risk of this industry is theft; hence this system of engagement which has undergone so much criticism. In the office of the De Beers Company there is circumstantial evidence, demonstrating how indispensable is this form of contract—the photograph of twenty-one diamonds which had been swallowed by a negro. On the information given by a comrade he was arrested, isolated and purged; the purge yielded diamonds having market value of five thousand five hundred pounds.

Kimberley is above everything an English town; it was necessary for me again to speak in the language of our allies. Oh! the torture of being literally nailed to a text, with all one's eloquence held in restraint!

The hall was magnificent, a repetition in miniature of that at the Capetown manifestation. There were twelve hundred people in full dress, glittering brilliantly with diamonds, a packed, enthusiastic audience. The meeting was presided over by the Mayor in uniform, assisted by the Town Clerk in black gown and white wig, seated on a stool at the

back of the president's chair. The president of the De Beers Company, Mr. Oats, proposed, amid thunderous applause, votes of admiration for Belgium, and the sending of a sympathetic telegram to King Albert. The mere name of our sovereign has an indescribable magic that electrifies these African crowds into outbursts of enthusiasm, both fine and affecting, which I shall never forget.

A splendid reception was held in my honour, the result of which was a good stream of gold, in purses delicately offered in the name of suffering Belgium by smiling and gracious young ladies.

It was again a surprise, tinged with sadness, to find myself in the midst of a brilliant society, reveling in the splendour and pleasures of luxury, and knowing nothing of this horrible war except the assuaging offices of charity and generosity.

## CHAPTER IX

OUR campaign in the Orange Free State was by many people considered a venture with small prospect of great results, wherein we should risk compromising the prestige and success of the Belgian Mission.

Pro-German sentiment reigned there, fierce and inveterate. Only a few days earlier fierce fighting had taken place there; De Wet had been taken prisoner, a great number of rebels had been arrested and sent to concentration camps. Mental excitement, hatred and treachery were rampant. These rural, unsophisticated, and simple people were permeated by the fixed idea: "Germany is the chivalrous and liberating nation, called by the design of Providence to restore to us the fullness of our rights and independence." For a reason easy to comprehend German propaganda against Belgium was here most in evidence. The Flemish people had always met with the warmest sympathy in the Orange as in the Transvaal region, and one recollects gratefully the warm reception given, in 1902, by Belgium and, above all, by Flanders, to the Boer Missions, which obtained repeated evidence of the generosity of the Belgians. The German emissaries were madly bent on destroying racial sympathies, and feelings of gratitude, by bringing

against us a mass of lies and slanderous statements. Some intellectuals even said, and believed in good faith, that, in agreement with France and England, Belgium had declared war upon Germany, that the Belgian civil population had armed and organized the resistance of the *francs-tireurs*, and that the women were barbarous enough to mutilate and kill wounded and captive Germans.

The general feeling about us was one of mingled pity and bitter resentment against old friends fallen so low "through being presumptuous, lacking in intelligence, and filled with hatred."

There was some risk in deciding to take our chance in the midst of people thus disposed, but was not that all the more reason for going among them? It was a serious matter for us. In the event of success it would be considered quite right and natural. But if we failed? Suppose the meetings were rudely disturbed, the Belgian delegates hooted or assaulted,—what joy there would be in the Teuton world, what reports would be circulated through the Wolff agencies, what exaggerated reports of "Belgium denounced by the Boers!" "A Belgian Mission forced to beat a retreat!" What reproaches for our want of foresight, our tactless policy!

But we had invincible faith in the truth of our cause, we had the faith that saves! Nevertheless, though it was easy for us to decide that we would go to those places where the enemy had done us most harm, it was not always very easy to get there. No longer, as in the Cape Province, did we meet with a cordial reception by the authorities,

and no longer was there any one at the railway station to greet and pilot us. One day the Anglican pastor alone showed himself willing to receive us and offer us Scottish hospitality, of which I retain a grateful recollection. In the afternoon, as we were drinking coffee, the Roman Catholic *curé* came to keep us company. Be it understood that there is neither bitterness nor resentment in these statements; we had been so shamefully abused that the authorities could not, without offending the public opinion of their constituents, make us any official advances. Some organs of the Dutch Press, in the pay of Germany, were leagued against us. One of the tricks of these journals was to give out that the Belgian Mission was an English Mission. They carried the shabby business so far as to ask who paid the expenses of our visits to the different towns; who defrayed the cost of the saloon carriage in which we travelled? The most important Dutch papers, of their own accord, replied with great dignity, protesting, in the name of traditional South African hospitality, against these absurd attacks, since it was well known that the municipalities had everywhere officially decided to receive the Belgian delegates as distinguished and welcome guests.

"Do we not owe this homage," said they, "to the Belgian nation which in 1902 so generously welcomed the Boers' Missions? Did a Belgian journal allow itself to ask, when Kruger passed through Belgium, who paid for the saloon carriage in which the President travelled?"

These attacks, deeply galling to the Boers' spirit of great hospitality, betrayed by their clumsiness



their German origin ; they appeared a little later in certain Flemish papers printed in Belgium under German control, and were shown to have one and the same source.

How was it that everywhere the Boers came in such extraordinary numbers to our meetings ? I often ask myself, and have never found any other answer than in the psychological fact that differentiates individual from collective acts. Individually they do not know us, they believe they have nothing in common with us ; to appear in a compact mass at a meeting has no precise import and may imply hostility quite as much as sympathy. But the Boer has at bottom an upright and kind nature, and it is only just to say that when he had listened to us, the mists generated by lying and slander were dissipated, and as the truth appeared, his mind, naturally open to generous sentiments, underwent a complete change. It was strange to see these hard-bitten peasants, who had come out of curiosity, quite determined not to abate one jot of their hostility towards us, suddenly applaud us warmly in one collective impulse. Sometimes, at the beginning of a meeting, one or two of the audience would rise, and arrogantly ask whether the meeting were opposed to the speaker. At such a moment there was powder about, a mere nothing might set it on fire. But our calm and friendly reply, in which we declared that we ourselves invited argument, immediately appeased them, and predisposed them in our favour. The Flemish language above all exercised a wonderful charm over them : there was in its accents the immediated an palpable proof of the racial bond

between us, and it always seemed to me that after our first words their hostility ceased, and that their consciences said : "These people, who, like us, speak that language for which we have always struggled, and which is as dear to us as the apple of our eye, cannot be as degenerate as they have been represented to us."

One day, at a place where no one came to receive us, we found, to our great astonishment, when evening came, a hall filled with about six hundred people,—an extremely cold and cross-grained audience. I was conscious of a sense of deep discouragement at the idea of the great damage done amongst these good people by German lies, but, by a violent reaction, I felt myself a veritable apostle when I mounted the platform. There, suddenly before my eyes, I saw the bleeding image of my martyred, reviled, calumniated Belgium. I made what was perhaps the most passionate and emotional speech of my life ; one of those rare efforts with which one really feels satisfied. I could not reproduce it, for the words came from the heart rather than from the head. But what happiness it was for me to see that icy audience give expression to warm sympathy. Oh ! the kind hearts ! It suddenly seemed as if they wished to destroy utterly those monstrous charges against us by their loud applause, and to transform all the rancour and contempt for the Flemish race that had been instilled into them into exuberant manifestations of cordial fraternity.

Acting under a touching impulse, a great hulk of a Boer climbed on to the platform and kissed my hand, seemingly desirous of making this kiss the

public avowal of repentance for having doubted us. And what happened next? We had said nothing that was a direct appeal to charity, considering that our position as official delegates forbade our taking a collection in the course of our meetings; it was not necessary even in the interests of our mission to speak with an alms-bowl in one's hands. But these Boers spontaneously made a collection at the door; our six hundred poured into the collecting boxes a sum of nearly one hundred and twenty pounds.

Elsewhere, in more than one place in the Orange Free State, the authorities courageously gave us the most emphatic reception. Thus, at Kroonstadt, where we found the bridges flanked with improvised works against rebel incursions, the Mayor organized a charming reception at the Town Hall, and a banquet was given in our honour by the Communal Council.

I had some difficulty in introducing myself at Boshof, and it was owing to the influence of the distinguished senator Mr. Marais, who had courageously agreed to preside over the meeting, that the use of the large hall was granted.

To get to Boshof I had to drive eighty-one miles in a motor-car, across the great plains of the Orange Free State. I was alone, and my colleague was speaking at Aliwal North; for, in order to get through all our engagements, it had been necessary to separate.

It was a long, solitary route, not a house or farm was to be seen. We rolled along at an altitude of nearly five thousand feet, through plains of grass,

green and high, which no one made into hay for want of labour, and which the farmer would some day set on fire and turn into manure. Substituting mimosas for pollards, one might liken Veurne-Ambacht to the plains of Knocke; its undulating and distant downs suggested Flanders, flat and green, with her boundless horizons. The fierce light made the yellow of the mimosa and the green of the grass hard and staring, and the shadows an intense violet. It was Flanders, yes, but all the same my Flanders is more beautiful, with its pretty roofs showing amid the verdure the whole gamut of red tints, haloed in soft, balmy, golden air.

After a long time the chauffeur pointed to a farm in the distance, where there were cows, sheep, splendid horses, mules and donkeys, pell-mell, almost hidden in the long grass. A negress passed along the roadside, a cloak of blue striped with yellow over her shoulders, her ebony legs exposed. A little black child clapping its hands was slung on to her back, and she carried on her head a vessel which she steadied there with a round arm encircled by a metal bracelet. That living bronze figure, against the green landscape, produced a striking effect.

We arrived at Boshof. I had been told that either the people would not come, or they would come and behave badly, and I thought—if only they would come! And they were there, from four to five hundred Boers, not a single Englishman, great sturdy-looking men, seated squarely in their chairs, body leaning forward, elbows on knees, looking at me from under their heavy eyebrows. Senator Marais, with the representative of Boshof at his

side, opened the proceedings by asking the pastor to say a prayer ; then he introduced me, begging the audience to listen to me with kindness and respect—the kindness merited by suffering, and the respect one owes to misfortune.

The heads were bent still further forward, and all of them looked on the ground, I saw nothing before me but the napes of their necks. Softly, gently, I spoke to them of Flanders, of her beauty, her fertility, her agriculturists—brave fellows, peaceable like themselves, and only asking to live amicably and laborious under the sun of the Good God. I spoke of that tenacious race attached to its soil, to its traditions and its language ; I reminded them of the sympathetic and generous reception which Belgians gave the Boers in 1902.

For an hour I told them of the German invasion, of the cruel injustice of that aggression, of the atrocities committed by the barbarians, of the bad faith of those perjured traitors : the necks remained motionless. The more I prolonged the effort the less possible was it for me, in the midst of a sepulchral silence, to discover the impression produced. When at last I came to the massacres of Dinant and Tamines, to the account of little children, of four, five, ten years old, pitilessly murdered by heartless wretches, some heads were lifted, a few shining eyes were fixed upon me. Calling to my aid the vigorous accents of Flemish poetry, I extolled the beauties of my mother-tongue, I depicted the German in Poland, destroying without mercy the language of the people ; and ended by saying that the sons of Flanders will either succeed or die in the attempt to reconquer their ancestral soil, to avenge

their dead, to retain the freedom of their language. It was no longer napes of necks that I had before me, but a sudden vision of strong square faces and bright eyes, in which shone a flame of sympathy.

In a poetical little speech the President, Mr. Marais, showed to me in a few words by what arguments I had succeeded in winning over my audience. "We also," said he, "have suffered. But we must own that we have never experienced the infamous and deliberate assassination of children, never has the crime been attempted of exterminating our mother tongue, as in Poland and Lorraine, for, I call you all to witness, we would die rather than endure that. What you have just heard demands an energetic protest from you; that is why I move a vote of cordial admiration of Belgium, and of energetic disapproval of Germany."

All the square heads were now erect, the motion was carried by enthusiastic "Bravos!"

To gain this success I had spoken for nearly two hours in a temperature of 102° Fahr. I won the applause of the brave back-veld Boers of Boshof—one of the most pleasant memories of my life. After the meeting a great number of them came to grasp me by the hand—ah! the rough hand-clasps! One of them stayed behind to say to me: "How can we possibly have believed those rascals? Go and tell all that to De Wet! Most assuredly he does not know it! He is too good and too honest to ally himself with such perjurers and hangmen!"

While escorting me to the motor-car the magistrate said to me: "If you knew the people of Boshof

as I know them, you would go away from here with the conviction that in all your life you had never pleaded so well or gained a greater success." "*Mon Dieu!*" I replied; "it is not to the lawyer that success should be attributed, but to the cause he defends; this cause is so noble, so just and honourable, made up of the agonies of a martyrdom so cruel, that it would compel the support even of Kaffirs and Zulus."

And indeed I spoke more truly than I knew. At Bethlehem, in the Orange Free State, the Kaffirs, having heard our speeches, collected their comrades, and repeated in their animated palaver the account of the sufferings endured by Belgium. The next day they sent us a sum of fourteen hundred pounds, the result of a collection made amongst their black brethren, the poorest of the poor—they have not even pockets!

How touching to think of these Kaffirs giving the Kaiser a lesson in civilization!

The success of the Boshof meeting made quite a sensation throughout the Orange Free State. A Boer leader, a surly fellow whom I visited the next day, said to me, shaking his head: "Boshof! Boshof! I do not know it any more!" We then visited a number of the chief people of the district, and this canvassing of individuals was equally successful. Many misunderstandings were dissipated by answers to questions and objections.

The German campaign against Belgium had been conducted by paid emissaries, who, on market days, and at popular reunions, mingled with the peasants, developing this argument: "The Belgians have

been tricked by France and England, and have foolishly leagued themselves against Germany, their true friend. If Belgium had shown intelligence, like Luxemburg and Holland, no harm would have happened to her, and she would have benefited greatly by the war."

It was often necessary to explain the situation of Holland, which had not been attacked, and had boldly declared her intention of defending herself, as we had done, if her territory were invaded ; to explain the position of the Grand Duchy, which enjoyed an unarmed neutrality ; to show it to be our duty to maintain,—by an army not of conquest, but of defence,—the integrity of our frontiers, a duty recognized by all,—by Germany herself,—particularly since the war of 1870. Thus eyes were opened, and the most obstinate understood that the "stupidity" of the Belgians was nothing but the fulfilment of a binding international obligation,—fidelity to compacts and to signed treaties.

"But," said a Boer to me one day, his eyes twinkling with a mixture of simplicity and malice, "one is not bound to attempt the impossible ; what man can, without boldness bordering on madness, think of opposing the rumbling storm, the rising waters, the hail that beats down his crops, the earthquake that destroys his farm ? Is not what you have attempted somewhat similar, this opposing what is so feeble and insignificant against the formidable German Empire ?"

"First of all," I replied, "the comparison is not correct ; one must distinguish between the act of God and the act of man. Against the act of God we can do nothing, I agree ; but Germany is not



God. The act of man can be combated by the act of man. In the spirit of the International Convention, which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, the latter, in case of invasion, was to be assisted by all the signatories to the treaty. In opposing the outrage perpetrated by Germany on the Belgian Fatherland, we respected our signed engagements, and our co-signatories on their part decided to remain faithful to theirs. We saved our honour and also assured for ourselves the friendship and support of France, England, and Russia, which is not a bad thing. Had we been so base as to forfeit our honour, we should have gained—with a blush of shame—the friendship of Germany, a friendship contingent on perjury. But we should have brought upon ourselves for ever the just resentment of the powerful Allies. If I understand you rightly, we ought to have stifled our consciences and listened to reason alone. Belgium did not hesitate, she listened rather to the voice of conscience, and the upshot will prove that this was no other than the voice of reason. The Belgian, believe me, has not gone in for bragging, for there can be nothing to boast about in behaving honestly ; and though he may be powerless against storm and tide, he awaits, ready armed for justice, the reward of the good, and the chastisement of the evil.”

Every allusion to the bad faith and treachery of the Germans had great effect in rebel districts. The fact that, up to August 2, 1914, official Germany had protested her friendship for Belgium, and her intention not to attack her ; the declarations of the Secretary of State, Von Jagow, affirming in the Reichstag that the treaties with Belgium would

be scrupulously respected ; the Kaiser's declaration of friendship at the time of his visit to Brussels, and on the morrow of Agadir, at Aix-la-Chapelle ; the "scrap of paper" incident, which they had looked upon as an English invention, though it was easy for us to establish its authenticity—all this filled the minds of the Boers with considerable uneasiness and anxiety. After the meetings they came and talked openly on the matter : "How is it possible," they said, "that a great nation thus tramples underfoot its promises, its oaths and treaties ? But then, were we going to be measured by the same standard, and was it to get the upper hand of us that Germany paid us such court ?" And they spoke of the treaty concluded by the rebel Maritz, saying how many hopes they had built upon it, especially since its ratification by the Emperor himself.

It was thus that I learned, for the first time, of the personal intervention of the Kaiser in the Boer rebellion. It is known that, later on, at the time of the conquest of German South-West Africa, General Botha discovered at Windhoek the text of a telegram worded as follows : "I am ready to recognize the independence of the Boers, and even to guarantee it, on condition that the rebellion breaks out without delay."

The Kaiser did not hesitate to compromise his dignity and honour by personally inciting the Boers, offering the imperial promise of a rich recompense for disloyalty and treason. Poor Boers ! they have had a narrow escape, and we could not have done them better service than by exposing the craftiness, perfidy and falsehood of Germany.

It is necessary to take into consideration the state of mind of the Boers. Since the rebellion they had had but little faith in what was printed in the newspapers, "because," said they, "the English only allow their own version to reach us." But *our* words were accepted at their face value, as the loyal deposition of witnesses who had seen, heard and proved. This explains the impression produced by our speeches, and the following saying of one of the most important men of the Union, in appreciation of our mission: "You have literally converted public opinion amongst the Boers." I must do the Afrikanders the justice of insisting that they were profoundly impressed by the duplicity, the disloyalty and double-dealing of the Germans, and that, confronted with this dilemma—either the old English rule or German rule—they all pronounced for the English.

One day, at our request, a magistrate—after some hesitation—consented to take us among the arrested and imprisoned rebels. At the time of our arrival they were walking about in compact groups, arguing and gesticulating: as soon as they saw us they stopped, the various groups drew back and joined up with one another, as though to unite against a possible danger, against something unexpected. They were, for the most part, tall, fine men, in the prime of life, khaki-clad, with low, wide-brimmed hats, loose trousers, riding boots, their sleeves tucked up over their strong, hairy arms. Every eye was turned upon us, but the expression on their faces was hard and forbidding. As we approached, the magistrate addressed them in their own language, announcing the delegates from Belgium. There was a moment

of hesitation, maybe, or incredulity, but when I advanced towards one of them, wishing him good-day, all of them, on hearing the Flemish tongue, with one accord raised their hats and greeted us. Their sullen expressions brightened, and into their eyes came a look in which curiosity and sympathy were strangely mingled. The magistrate had stepped aside, and we chatted together, many things being said in a few moments, in brief and clear sentences, as people speak when they have only a short time to spend with one another. All of them knew about our meetings, either from letters received from their relations or by hearsay, and there was a tone of sad regret in their voices when they said: "If only we had known!" and sincerity in the oft-repeated words: "We sympathize with you."

"If we had known!" It was a bitter confession in the mouths of those rebels, who not for anything in the world would have said as much to a judge in their own defence; but they said it to me as a confession. It was indeed a revelation. It has been said that there is no Boer who is not a rebel at heart, more or less, in the sense that the dream of independence is as dear as the memory of their ancestors, the pride of their history, their love of race. This does not prevent the Boers from being for the most part loyal, because they distinguish clearly between a good argument and mere assumption, they know that all rebellion is madness, and that, but for a few grievances, the yoke of Britain is so slight a burden that it is practically equivalent to independence. But then, German intrigue blinds certain elements in these impulsive and sentimental people, affirming that the Kaiser's omnipotence is at

their service, that it guarantees their independence, that the favourable moment has struck, that it is enough to will and the dream will become a reality. This makes the proudest, the most ardent and the most credulous, blindly follow the lead of some headstrong leaders.

How they had been deceived! The imposing forces of the Kaiser in Africa—what were they? A myth. The promises of independence?—a snare to draw into the German Colony whatever might swell the German forces. And that revelation of deception—Germany tearing up treaties, repudiating her signature, crucifying little Belgium. It was all present in that word: “If we had known!” the confession of those disabused Boers, victims of the cunning propaganda and the intrigues of Germany.

After taking a somewhat sad leave of the rebels, and visiting the various quarters of the prisoners under the guidance of the magistrate, we were about to depart, when a Boer came straight up to me and solicited, for himself and his companions, the favour of being allowed to attend our meeting that evening. This was very embarrassing for the magistrate, who, however, ended by permitting the best speaker amongst them to attend, discreetly guarded from view, so that he might next day repeat to his comrades, at his leisure, the speeches of the Belgian delegates.

An astonishing fact was the persistence of a strong faith in the success of Maritz in the backveld of the Orange Free State, even after the arrest of Christian De Wet and the dispersion of his last commandos. At Harrismith—where we had a rousing meeting—a man was tried for having in

a public speech endeavoured to persuade his fellow-citizens to join Maritz and the Germans. "You are," he had said, "profoundly mistaken if you believe that the rebellion is near its end ; it is only beginning. General Maritz is having a brilliant success ; he has just taken prisoner fifteen hundred soldiers of the Union. The rebellion is spreading all over the north of the Cape, whence thousands of men are setting out for the German frontier. It is only now that things are working up." This fiery orator was condemned to pay a fine of six hundred francs, or go to prison for three months. It was poor rhetoric, as we saw quite well, having just made a successful tour in the north of Cape Colony ! Everywhere, also, judicial investigations against the rebels were in progress, which brought into the midst of a feverish excitement a great influx of witnesses and inquisitive folk. The greater number of those proceeded against had to answer for having destroyed telegraph poles and railway lines, or having "requisitioned" horses, arms, cattle and provisions from loyalists.

As may easily be understood, our passage through these centres, and our speeches at the meetings formed the subject of every conversation and created a current of hostility to the Germans, who had hitherto been so highly praised—in fact, almost idealized.

Nothing aroused warm sympathies so thoroughly as the account of Belgium's martyrdom ; every day we proved more and more fully that the Boer at heart is a great sentimentalist. Those brave, strong strapping warriors, as fearless in the face of gun-fire as before the claws of a lion, celebrated for their

contempt of physical suffering, who refuse chloroform in their surgical operations, have an almost feminine sensitiveness. Acts of cruelty committed against a woman or a child bring tears to their eyes and sadness to their strong faces. The other day, in church, was read a letter resigning his office of chief of the parish by Dr. Herman Van Broekhuizen, a faithful friend of General Beyers, who had been arrested and imprisoned at Johannesburg. An eye-witness told me that, during the reading, all the men, even those opposed to Van Broekhuizen, shed tears. The following is a part of this letter, which introduces us to the language of the Boer clergy—

“No one can say what I have suffered these last two months along with my old friend and counsellor, whom I shall never forget, General Beyers. I have become a feeble old man, whom the slightest work exhausts. I have always sought for my parishioners, from the spiritual as well as the temporal point of view, the path of right and happiness. I now hand you my resignation, and that in the general interest, for I know you are divided in your judgment of my acts, and since there must be a victim, it is better that it should be myself and not my flock. This resolve has been made after long deliberation, after bitter tears shed in the privacy of my prison, wrung from my very soul! I have always been ready to sacrifice my life for the good of my parish, my people, and my country. The future, like the present, belongs to God; I say to you all, God reigns! If there is any one amongst you whom I have involuntarily injured may he forgive me as I forgive all. There is in my heart no particle of hate or rancour,

nothing but sadness and suffering. My heart ever burns with the love of Jesus, my Lord and Master, and that on your behalf—the sheep and lambs of His flock. If we should never meet again here below, I say to you, we shall meet in Heaven above.”

Boer sentiment is a factor, the political importance of which should not be ignored when dealing with men at once impulsive and courageous. Far less will always be gained from these people by violence and intimidation than by gentleness and patience. The calculated delay of Botha in repressing the rebellion proves that he knew intimately both the men of his race, and the policy that suited them. One day I paid a visit to an uncompromising leader, a rough man who, I was told, would not receive us. I shall see him before my eyes for a long time—a tall, broad fellow, six feet high, with black hair and moustache and dark eyes, well set up, though a little heavy in build, a man in his fortieth year. When he guessed who I was, his features were contorted like those of a man about to fly into a rage. I said to him : *Zal U toelaten dat een zoon van Vlaanderen U de hand drukke?* (“Will you allow a son of Flanders to shake hands with you?”) The sound of the Flemish language produced the expected effect, in this sense at least, that he received us with cold politeness instead of with anger. Then suddenly he challenged me in the same language : “How is it possible for you to have behaved so foolishly in Belgium?” This was said in the rude, bitter tone of one who would repudiate his race and children. An hour later he took both my hands in his, and said to me, with tears running down his face : “None can appreciate



better than we what you have unjustly suffered ; from the bottom of my heart I sympathize with you." It was strange, almost symbolical, that this great fellow, shuddering with horror, his eyes wet with tears, had during the war always been in the firing line, had continued fighting after two bullets had struck him, had not given in until a third broke his arm.

Our stay at Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, unexpectedly crowned all our efforts. Received at the railway station by the Administrator of the province and the Mayor of the town, we were escorted to an hotel decked with the Belgian colours, where the municipality had taken rooms for us. Bloemfontein is a charming town of thirty thousand inhabitants, situated at an altitude of four thousand five hundred feet above sea level, in the centre of the old Orange Free State, now a province of the Union, covering a greater area than the whole of England.

At the time of the constitution of the South African States in a parliamentary union, Bloemfontein claimed, as did Pretoria and Capetown, to be the capital of the Union, its central position affording every advantage from this point of view. They made a compromise : Pretoria was to be the administrative capital, the seat of the Government ; Capetown the legislative, the seat of Parliament ; and Bloemfontein the judicial capital, the seat of the High Courts of Justice.

Bloemfontein has some signs of being a capital ; it contains some important monuments. I noted particularly the Parliament buildings, where the Chamber, or *Volksraad*, met under the Republic, and

which reminds one of the Hotel Mazarin, where the Immortals take their seats under the Cupola. The Law Courts are handsome and classic in style. The long Parliament building, with a tower in very bad taste rising from its centre, vaguely recalls the buildings that children construct with a box of toy blocks. The very agreeable Mayor showed me proudly the municipal installations—slaughter-houses, public baths, fire-stations, library, electric lighting, playing ground, crematorium, industrial school, Dutch high-school, and other places which render Bloemfontein quite a model city.

My first Boer correspondent in Africa had written to me, "Above all, do not miss seeing the Bloemfontein Monument," and I did not miss it. It is called, *Het national vrouwen monument* ("The national monument of Women"). At the end of the town, standing out in bold relief against a background of undulating plain, and rising from a large circular base which is reached by about twenty steps, an obelisk one hundred and thirteen feet high pierces the horizon with its fine and towering lines. At the base of the obelisk, upon a pedestal, is a group of two women, so beautiful and impressive, that on looking at it one is lost in a world of thought. Maitre van Wouw, the celebrated South African sculptor, has put into this bronze all the feeling and soul of his race. One of the women is seated, holding on her knees an emaciated, slender-limbed boy, in a dying state. Pressing her poor child to her breast, this mother holds her head high, though her face is worn with suffering, and looks straight before her with an expression of concentrated grief that makes one

shudder. The other woman, tall and strong, as are the Boer mothers, stands with her back to the monument, and lifts her beautiful profile towards the sky, with a calm look that seems to find there resignation and hope. The contrast is so striking and so beautifully executed that it produces the deepest admiration in the mind of the spectator. Two bronze panels to the right and left of the group represent scenes from the concentration camp. One shows in surprising perspective the raised door-hangings of the sugarloaf-shaped tents, in which are lying the sick and dying ; the other groups are of women burdened with children and hurrying towards the camp. The scene is vivid and animated ; every face has its own expression, the self-willed look of the Boer women, so ardent in their unconquerable patriotism. Below the monument is this inscription in the Boer language—

“TO OUR HEROINES AND DEAR CHILDREN.”

*“Thy Will Be Done.”*

“This national monument has been raised in memory of 26,370 women and children who perished in the concentration camps, and of other women and children who succumbed elsewhere, in consequence of the war of 1899–1902.”

“INAUGURATED DECEMBER 10, 1913.”

The monument, at once fine and imposing, will remain as an age-long witness of the sufferings endured in the course of the Boer War ; it has become a place of pilgrimage for the crowd of those who remember and who hope.

But it is well to recognize that its existence is also an eloquent testimony to the liberties those enjoy who live under British "domination." Can one imagine the Poles, or the people of Lorraine, being allowed to build a similar monument in the heart of their annexed countries? The mere conception of the idea would involve imprisonment or fine. And that points to the difference between the two policies, I was going to say the two civilizations.

The success of our campaign in the Orange Free State had, it was considered, made a great impression at Bloemfontein, and an enthusiastic meeting was promised us. It was on a scale hitherto unequalled. In the spaces between the stalls and dress circle people were sitting on the floor; all the gangways were crammed; in the gallery, right to the ceiling, one could see nothing but heads touching one another. There were eighteen hundred people in a hall meant to hold fifteen hundred only.

When we appeared upon the scene—escorted by the Administrator of the Orange Free State, the Mayor of the capital and some representatives of Bloemfontein, Messrs. C. L. Botha and J. Steyl—the ovation became delirious. The audience shouted, gesticulated, yelled and emitted piercing whistles. The last, coming from the gallery, were, I was assured, the very latest thing in popular enthusiasm.

The public excitement was such that there were interruptions and bursts of applause every moment. I shall never forget the spectacle of that crowd, when I spoke of our King at the moment when he made his entry at the Chamber of Representatives

on August 4, 1914. It was like a rolling sound, sweeping from pit to gallery, breaking in a deafening wave of cheering.

Reuter's Agency cabled the same evening to six London newspapers the following telegram—

"The Belgian Mission, following its route through the Union, has arrived at Bloemfontein, where it has been received with extraordinary enthusiasm. The meeting took place before a literally packed audience. A vote of sympathy for Belgium was carried unanimously. The allusions to King Albert aroused the greatest enthusiasm."

The following day the Bloemfontein papers gave long accounts of the meeting under the sensational titles of "The Tragedy of Belgium," "The Visit of the Belgians," "Enthusiastic Meeting at the Grand Theatre."

Here are some extracts from a report; it will be noticed how quick the African Press is in its reporting, how prompt in its critiques.

"With regard to the size of the audience, and the impressive unanimity of their sentiments, the meeting at Bloemfontein last night was a record. Long before the hour fixed, the theatre was more than full. A thunder of applause greeted the Belgian delegates when they appeared on the platform. After the Administrator, who presided, had finished his address of welcome to the envoys of 'gallant little Belgium,' there was again, as Advocate M. Standaert rose to speak, an extraordinary ovation. He spoke in Flemish, his mother tongue, a sort of dialect of the Dutch language, which the assembly could follow and understand without difficulty, as was

proved by the cries of *Hoor! Hoor!* and *Schande!* which soon rose from all parts of the hall. Our representative, Mr. C. Botha, was anxious to translate into English for the portion of the audience who did not understand the *Taal*, but necessarily the translation could not convey the passionate eloquence of the speakers, who aroused, each in his turn, deep indignation against Germany, and the greatest admiration for the noble courage of the Belgians. The public left the meeting with a feeling of revolt against German barbarity, and the conviction that henceforth the predominance of the German race should be opposed tooth and nail. In words of lofty eloquence M. Standaert described the historic scene in the Brussels Parliament, at the time when Belgian territory was violated, and all the representatives stood shoulder to shoulder to defend their threatened country. The Member for Bruges made a great impression by the conviction and sincerity of his language. He was stirring and impassioned when, after mentioning deeds of horrible cruelty, he declared that 'the sons of those mothers and the brothers of those sisters' would fight to the last man to avenge their race against all the horrors of German barbarity. When he told of King Albert making his noble speech in the Belgian Parliament, the effect was irresistible, and evoked a splendid ovation in honour of that valiant sovereign.

"Dr. Van der Perre in his turn was warmly applauded. He protested energetically against German slander, which persists in representing Belgium as having been leagued with England and France against Germany. That, said he, was so untrue

that for fifteen days Belgium had had to face her terrible enemy quite alone, without France or England being able to come to her aid. The atrocities seem to have ceased for the time being, before the indignation of the nations, to which Belgian delegates everywhere have denounced Germany's crimes. The representative of Antwerp then gave a striking picture of the misery that reigns in Belgium. Though hardly a quarter as large as the Orange Free State, it has a population of eight million inhabitants. Two million have been able to take refuge in foreign lands, but six million live in Belgium, without sufficient food or clothing suited to the season, while Germany continues to impoverish them and strip them of everything. 'In spite of all that,' said Dr. Van der Perre in a voice quivering with emotion and pride, 'the Belgians remain indomitable and unbroken under German rule, and hold their heads high, because, though they have lost everything else, they still retain their honour. What a grand lesson for South Africa, which also it behoves to listen to the call of General Botha, and take the side of honour, if she is to secure universal esteem while waiting to gather the laurels of victory.'"

In the street, in front of the great theatre, a crowd which gathered after the meeting was over, gave us a warm ovation. Bloemfontein sealed with the stamp of its enthusiasm the complete success of our mission in the Orange Free State.

## CHAPTER X

THE detailed reports of the meeting at Bloemfontein enable me to give here a translation of my speech.

“Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen : I seek in vain for fitting words to respond to the grand demonstration of which we are the object. Many thanks, noble and generous people of this beautiful capital of the Orange Free State, where we have met with tokens of sympathy and affection which we shall never forget.

“Why should I not confess it? ‘You will receive in the Orange Free State,’ we had been told, ‘polite and correct treatment—for hospitality is the cardinal virtue of that country—but that perhaps will be all!’ And lo! you receive us with transports of wild enthusiasm; you open your arms affectionately, as though to comfort us with your warm and generous sympathy. And now, some one has told me that you have already given two thousand pounds to the fund for the relief of the Belgians, and that on the occasion of our visit you propose to double this sum. A moment ago, just before entering this hall, I was informed of a gift amounting to two hundred and forty pounds from railway *employés* of Bloemfontein, and another



gift of two hundred pounds from the 'Evening Star' lodge. Do you not realize, in the emotion that impedes my voice, how powerless are words of mine, to tell you, in the name of my country, in the name of Belgium, how imperishable is our gratitude?

"Belgium! Flanders! My Flanders! It needs a poet's lyre, and the pencil of an artist, to depict my country's wealth, her gentleness and beauty.

"Her wealth! Belgium is not a large country like this, wherein the ploughshare of the Flemish Boer has made the fruits of the earth to flourish: there is no land of its restricted area the livestock whereof includes fine breeds of horses and oxen. There is not a corner of the world more populous, with houses more closely crowded, more active and laborious inhabitants, and more Savings Bank deposits and greater thrift.

"Her gentleness! Those who like myself were born, and have been brought up in that land of peace, know well that those easy-going and peace-loving people are strangers to human restlessness, and have an innate horror of all that is involved in ambition, war, militarism. In the heart of the gentle life of our fair plains, neither the dreams nor the desires of the Flemish went further than the limits of their fertile fields and their happy firesides, where their numerous children grew up like a blessed harvest.

"Her beauty! There is not a country that includes in boundaries so narrow so many gems of art,—belfries, ancient halls, imposing towers, magnificent churches,—so many monuments to dream about, which are alike the admiration of the world and the pride of our race.

“Without the slightest motive, despite her promises, trampling her honour and engagements underfoot, treacherously lavishing on us tokens of friendship up to the very eve of attack, the coward Germans fell on us, a thousand to one, more barbarous than the barbarians of any age, and reduced all this beauty and wealth to dust and ashes. They took our peaceful population by the throat, tortured it, violated our women and massacred our poor little children without pity. I do not come here to tell you of the cruel acts which, alas ! are the sad accompaniment of all wars. Between the nations of old Europe, Asia and Africa was recently established a series of laws dealing with war, an international code of civilized nations. Measures of protection for non-combatants, the rights of occupants in invaded countries, special guarantees for places of worship and monuments of art, safeguards for hospitals and wounded, proper treatment of prisoners of war, free travel for civilians of all nations, respect for private property and absolute prohibition of pillage as of the bombardment of unfortified places, the forbidding of floating mines—all this was discussed in detail and adopted by Germany in agreement with the world-powers, all this is of recent date and bears the signature of the Kaiser.

“It may be said that, previous to 1907, the law of war was the law of the good pleasure of the belligerents, that there were customs, but no obligation. Since that date there has been a code, a contractual law of civilized peoples, the law of war, sealed with the seals of the Powers, which none can evade without coming under the ban of the nations. This code of laws, known under the name of The Hague

Convention, was considered at the beginning of the twentieth century to be one of the noblest victories of progress and civilization. Alas ! that monument of jurisprudence, that glorious work of human genius, drawn up by the most eminent statesmen of the world, suddenly falls to pieces. All the articles of the war-code are impudently violated one after the other by Germany, who, one might say, has made it her aim to perpetrate, with the utmost cynicism, every deed and crime that The Hague Convention prohibits and condemns. The German has an incomprehensible, blind passion for tearing up contracts he has signed, engagements he has undertaken. The signature of Germany is no more than a 'scrap of paper' which she treads underfoot; nor is she ashamed to have it known that, for twenty years she has been cheating England, deluding the Powers, making promises and signatures galore, determined to snap her fingers at them, and planning the most monstrous attempts on International Law and humanity. I know how deeply and truly attached you are to your religious principles, and you will not be surprised that International Laws of war extended its special protection to places of Divine worship. It is doubtless for this reason that the rage of the Teutons first fell upon sacred edifices and ecclesiastics. At the time I left Europe the Germans had demolished more than seventy churches in Belgium ; images of Christ, objects of devotion, convents, statues, fell one after another, under the destructive rage of those new iconoclasts. Nieuport, Ypres, Louvain, Dinant, Termonde, Dixmude, Furnes,—all these names call to mind famous cathedrals, now only ruins and ashes. The churches

of Louvain and Dixmude each had a rood screen of world-wide renown, works of art cut in stone, marvels of delicate workmanship, lightness and grace, dainty filigree which one might imagine to have been wrought by a fairy's hands. There remains of these nothing but a heap of dust. This sacrilege against religion and against art was prompted by pure vengeance, not by strategic necessity. After the monuments it was the turn of the priests, the ministers of religion. I knew our clergyman well, his patriotism and presence of mind were admirable. During the first few weeks of the war I listened to the teaching and sermons of our priests; not an imprudent word was said. All preached the duty of civil populations to abstain from any attack or violence against the enemy, as the right of defending the country was confined by the laws of warfare to the soldiers alone. It was against these men, real ministers of peace, that the Germans forthwith directed their blind rage. I have heard it estimated that about a hundred priests were assassinated by the Kaiser's soldiers. In the single diocese of Namur, the corroborative evidence collected by the Commission of Inquiry cites twenty-four cases of the murder of ecclesiastics by the soldiery. And what refinement of infamy showed itself in these outrages! The consideration I have for you does not permit of my saying more than this.

"Within the restricted limits of a speech I must necessarily confine myself to one or two examples. In the diocese of Malines, at Beuken, the *curé*, an elderly invalid, who had been laid up for some months, was dragged from his bed of suffering, put upon a cannon, and promenaded thus through the

village. Finding the punishment insufficient, the wretches unbound him and dragged him by the feet, the unfortunate man's head bumping over the pavement. Then they cut off his nose and ears, and finished him off by rifle shots.

"Another *curé* in the same diocese, who had desired to give the last consolations of religion to an old man whom they had murdered with blows from the butt-ends of their rifles, was seized and tied to a tree. After torturing him in the most cruel manner, the German soldiers broke his legs, then covered him with filth, and finally killed him by blowing out his brains.

"According to evidence collected at the inquest, this soldiery, possessed by a devilish perversity, compelled priests to witness abominable crimes committed by German officers and soldiers upon young girls.

"The venerable Bishop of Tournay, an old man of seventy-seven years, was dragged from his bed, taken as a hostage, obliged to make a long journey in the night on foot, brutally treated and imprisoned under infamous conditions. And now, to-day, telegrams announce that even Cardinal Mercier, the eminent Primate of Belgium, one of the glories of the Church, has not escaped persecution. Perhaps his lofty personality will protect him from brutality; but to have threatened his liberty, to keep him prisoner in his palace, is in itself an unjustifiable act. And what is his crime? He had, say the telegrams, notified in a pastoral letter to the faithful of Belgium, that they owed no allegiance to the German Emperor, that their one and only sovereign to whom they owe fidelity, is His Majesty King

Albert I. If that really is the proud order of the Cardinal, I hasten to say that his mandate is not only the admirable act of a courageous patriot, but a proper statement of right and law. Speaking as a man of law, I affirm that nothing is more justifiable from the point of view of international law, than the claim expressed by Cardinal Mercier. It is universally admitted in law that a country occupied in war-time by the invader does not belong to him; all writers on international law teach that the transfer of sovereignty does not take place until the end of hostilities, and after a treaty of peace, duly signed, has effected the change. Germany recognized this principle when she signed, at The Hague, the Convention which stipulates that the occupant of the invaded country cannot exercise any other rights than those of an usufruct. No act of German militarism should astonish us; but in the conditions just mentioned, to harass and condemn the Primate of Belgium is surely folly and double-dyed infamy.

"What can I say about the attacks upon civilians and their property? Here words are inadequate to describe in detail the ignominy of the German armies. Louvain, Dinant, Aerschot, Termonde,—these names alone are enough to conjure up the hideous and bloody phantom of barbarism.

"The German horrors! Will there ever arise a writer, an orator, an artist of sufficient genius to bring to life again the tragic story in which Belgium and the North of France are the quivering victims? It would need a Dante and his immortal genius to create in hell a new circle of horror and infamy, the circle of German *Kultur*.

"And all this was not the exploit of a drunken

soldiery, in an hour of madness or of unwitting fury, but the work of chiefs of the High Command, proceeding methodically, and by order, to steal, pillage and burn private property.

“At Tamines, men of all ages were collected in the public square, and squads of German soldiers received orders to fire upon the mass until the last man fell. As the carnage was not thus effected quickly enough, they brought machine-guns to mow down some hundred and fifty peaceable and inoffensive Belgian citizens. The next day they forced all the surviving able-bodied men of the village to bury the victims; brothers interred their brothers, sons their fathers, fathers their dear sons. Amongst the corpses were found those who were only wounded, groaning and imploring some one to come to their aid. The Belgians demanded that mention should be made of the condition of these unfortunates. Would you like to know the reply of the military authority? ‘They are not dead? All the same, bury them with the others.’ And under threat of death the unhappy Belgians were forced to bury alive their relations and their friends!

“Hundreds of witnesses affirm that after the houses had been pillaged they were methodically set on fire. The men stood in a line in front of the houses, and, at the command of their chiefs, by means of grenades, of special liquids, and incendiary pastilles, lighted the destructive fires which spread with stupefying rapidity.

“You will understand that it is not possible for me to give here a detailed account of the German atrocities. Will you permit me to speak only of those I recall more vividly, because they concern

people I have known and loved. A fortnight before the war, I had entertained at my table a distinguished *confrère*, a lawyer of Brussels, a man still young, in full enjoyment of life, adored by his relations and before whom a most brilliant future was opening up. On August 1 he set off to Visé for a holiday. The Germans invaded the country. Calm, strong in his sense of right, well versed in international law, my friend remained quietly indoors. The Prussian soldiers invaded his house and set about pillaging it; the lawyer protested, proving that pillage is formally forbidden. The German soldiery, surprised at the simplicity of this jurist, hesitated a moment, uncertain whether to laugh or be angry. The natural German spirit prevailed; a few moments later my poor friend was shot outside his villa.

"One of my political friends at Limburg, on hearing of the arrival of the Germans, fled from home taking his young child with him. He was met by some German soldiers who transfixed with their lances both him and his poor little boy.

"My friend, M. Gravis, Mayor of Péronne, was my colleague in the Chamber of Representatives at Belgium, a charming man of jovial disposition. He did not speak much in Parliament, but had the knack of putting in a word, and knew when to introduce the amusing remark that stops a quarrel and smooths things out. Sometimes, when a serious storm threatened to blow up, the voice of Gravis would be heard, uttering, in the good-natured manner from which he never departed, some joke that set the Chamber laughing and calmed the parliamentary storm. He was a thoroughly good



all-round man, everyone's friend, peaceable and jovial.

"When the Prussians entered his district, the material wealth of which attracted their robber instincts, they pretended, as was their custom, that civilians had fired upon the soldiers. M. Gravis coldly asked that such civilians should be pointed out, or at least their houses. 'I know,' he explained, 'that all the inhabitants of my district, at my express desire, handed over their arms to the district authorities: if you can indicate a single one of my fellow-citizens who has committed the deed of which you accuse them, take me as hostage.' The only answer given by the commanding officer was the order to put the Mayor of Péronne to death. He was hanged, and his body remained exposed for three days on the gibbet.

"What shall I say of the crimes committed against women? Poor mothers, poor young girls!

"At Corbeck-Loo, near Louvain, five German soldiers stopped a girl of sixteen years and threw her down on a grass-plot. She defended herself with the valour of despair. It needed three shots from a revolver to put an end to her, after which these heroes abandoned their victim, disgracefully outraged, but gloriously dead.

"I could tell you of a young lady of eighteen years, a member of one of our best families, who had her wrists broken in defending herself against the attack of a German soldier. In the province of Antwerp some German officers, under threats of death compelled two young women to wait on them at table, dressed only in their chemises; I will say no more—unless it be to add that the next

morning one of them was dead, and the other mad.

"In a village near Louvain, the German soldiers burned Mme. van Kriegeling and eight of her children alive ; the ninth managed to escape, but the poor boy was immediately shot.

"At Louvain, during the burning of the town, soldiers on guard murdered those who tried to escape from the flames.

"And the children ! Those dear and fragile little beings, whose weakness is invincible strength, became the Germans' prey. At Tamines alone the Kaiser's soldiers massacred twenty-seven under twelve years of age.

"One of my nephews, a volunteer in the Belgian army, was taking part in a reconnaissance round the environs of Menin, when they captured a German patrol. As usual, they commenced to search the prisoners. In the knapsack of one of these they found the freshly amputated hand of a child probably from five to six years of age !

"Has not my colleague, Dr. Van der Perre, seen, in London, a baby of ten months, of which the nose and the finger-tips of each hand had been burnt by the wretches serving Germany ?

"Do you understand now what a flood of hate rises in the heart of the Belgian nation ; how the husbands of those wives, the brothers of those sisters, the fathers of those little children fight like lions ? Do you know that they inscribed on the banks of the Yser, 'Here the barbarians shall not pass !' Do you know that they have sworn to die to the last man rather than yield up the last clods of their country to the infamous German ?

“Ah! Germany would fain escape the contempt of the world which weighs her down like a leaden cap. Many times during my stay in Africa I have heard this objection raised by German emissaries, ‘All that has happened lies at Belgium’s door, for she violated her neutrality; she was in league with France and England to attack Germany.’

“What a miserable excuse! Even if it were true, how would it justify the horrors committed? But I hasten to add that there is not a word of truth in it. With the utmost indignation, and the consciousness of honesty, I reply to Germany, in the name of my Government and my country: ‘You lie, and you know that you lie!’

“Certainly these tactics are skilful, but they will not succeed. Germany seeks to justify the crime of having in so cowardly a manner attacked a small, quiet, and pacific country, and of having accomplished this act of chivalry by trampling underfoot her promises, her signature and her honour. She tries to avert from Belgium the flood of sympathy that flows towards her. In the South African Union above all, Germany knows that, when the truth is fully known, the honest and chivalrous Boer people will turn from her with contempt and loathing.

“German emissaries maintain that Belgium abandoned her neutrality to benefit France, signing a convention,—the text of which the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin possesses,—by which Belgium is to grant a free passage to the French troops *en route* to Germany. If such a compact existed, is it not evident that, to justify itself in the eyes of the world, the German Government would publish the text?

"We have plain proof of the falsehood in the fact that on August 4, 1914, at the very moment when the German troops were violating the neutrality of Belgium, the Chancellor, von Bethmann Hollweg, declared in the Reichstag that the wrong done to Belgium would be repaired as soon as possible. It was an injustice, and reparation was due to Belgium. Therefore, Germany did not go to war with us because we had failed in our international duties. The confession is formal, authorized and public.

"Only one deduction can be made from this impudent lie; and that is the obligation of Belgium, under penalty of violating her neutrality, to forbid French troops passing through Belgian territory. If that were true as regards France, it was the same as regards Germany, against whom Belgium had to bar the way, under penalty of failing in her international obligations.

"Confuted on this point, the German agents brought forward new grounds of accusation against Belgium, as follows. They found at Brussels a note of the Belgian General Ducarne, containing the *résumé* of a conversation he had had with the English Colonel Barnardiston, military *attaché* of Great Britain. This said that the English were ready to send to Belgium a hundred and fifty thousand men to assist in defending her neutrality. That seems to me to be quite in order. England was the guarantor of our neutrality. Is it not legitimate that she should have stated in what way she meant to intervene in the event of Belgium's integrity being encroached upon? It was not only the right of England to fly to Belgium's aid, but

her duty. England was obliged to do so ; otherwise, in the words of Sir Edward Grey, her signature would no longer have any value. Here is another sample of German mentality. When alluding to General Ducarne's note, the Germans omitted to add that they found therein these very words : 'The entry of England into Belgium would not take place until *after* the violation of neutrality by Germany.' Such an omission is the work of a forger. Lying is followed by forgery ; these are the means whereby you are cheated. Tell me, could the Germans do a greater injury to a people as frank and loyal as you are, than to lead you astray and dupe you by calumny and falsehood ?

"The truth, which in spite of all will remain unaltered, is that the policy of the Belgian Government has not for a single moment departed from the most scrupulous observance of all the duties of neutrality.

"From this may be drawn the inevitable conclusion : in attacking Belgium, the German Empire has committed the most odious of crimes against the International Law of Europe, and against the existence of a small, friendly, honest and peaceable nation.

"Let me answer an objection which has been made to me several times in Africa, and only this afternoon by a distinguished member of the Bloemfontein Bar. 'Why,' it is asked, 'did you resist the German hordes ? The neutrality of Belgium did not compel you to this act of heroism. The obligation ceased at the moment when *force majeure* rendered success impossible.'

"Were we obliged to defend our neutrality by arms ?

“There is no doubt as to the answer. Belgium, considered inviolable, like a buffer state between the two rival nations of France and Germany, was by the very nature of that conception a barrier, not an open road.

“That barrier could consist only of fortifications and soldiers. It was generally agreed that Belgium, to satisfy the obligations of neutrality, should maintain an armed force to check the invader long enough to allow her guarantors to come to her aid. The duty of Belgium in defending her frontiers was never seriously questioned. Lord Palmerston, who stood sponsor for our independence, and after him all Belgian statesmen since 1830, were unanimous in acknowledging this obligation. Does not this unanimity, this universal agreement of politicians of all parties, form some criterion to go by?

“The Germans cited the example of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. That is another unfair argument, for they well know that the Grand Duchy possesses only an unarmed neutrality, and that by the treaty conferring its independence the raising or maintaining of fortifications is forbidden.

“It is impossible for a statesman, for a jurist worthy of this name, to contend that Belgium was not in honour bound to defend by arms the integrity of her territory.

“There remains the objection based on the case of *force majeure*, resulting from the impossibility of a small country opposing a colossus like Germany. This objection gives rise to the erroneous belief, which is here so common, that Belgium has given proof of unwise or reckless simplicity, which raises doubts as to the sagacity and clear-sightedness of

her rulers. If you would fathom this reasoning inspired by the German emissaries, it may be summed up as follows :—it would have been more intelligent for Belgium to break her engagements, and place herself at once on the side of the stronger party.

“Break her engagements, tear up a contract, tread honour underfoot? No indeed, Belgium would not do it! Trembling with indignation when Germany proposed the shameful bargain, she refused outright, spurning the gold offered by Germany.

“Do you not see that it would have been vile and infamous to lay one hand in the hand of the German who was violating our frontiers, and to withdraw the other from the friendly hands of England, France and Russia, who remained faithful to the treaties signed with us? To throw ourselves into the arms of the perjurer, to repulse loyal friends—was that what you would have us do? But believe this,—Belgium, even had she been lacking in a sense of honour, still possessed a sense of loathing.

“‘What does that matter,’ some will say, ‘if the perjurer be the stronger?’ That Germany is the stronger is a doubtful question which, to all appearance, events will contradict; but the fact that the Allied Powers are on our side destroys the judicial argument of *force majeure*. Then, above all, there is in the Belgian nation so great a regard for moral propriety and loyalty, that it would gladly inscribe on its coat of arms the words that Corneille puts into the mouth of the Cid—

*‘Et d’autant que l’honneur m’est plus cher que le jour!’*

“Say and do what he likes, the German will not succeed in smirching the fair fame of Belgium. Strong in the calm dignity of duty, Belgium has not failed in her international obligations. She appears in the eyes of the world as a spotless victim sacrificed in cold blood by the bloodthirsty Germans because she refused to sacrifice her honour. This attack upon a weak nation, which has never offended another, has shown the world of what Germany is capable ; every one feels menaced by such imperial brigandage.

“How sublime an episode it is in the history of the Belgians, not to have yielded to the attempts at corruption or to the menaces of Germany ; to have been unanimous throughout the country in marching as one man along the path of duty ! Nowhere did this common will manifest itself so plainly as at the solemn Session of the Chamber of Representatives at Brussels on August 4, 1914.

“When the usher-in-chief announced the King, and there suddenly appeared at the door, with its white and red background, the manly young face of the Sovereign, the entire Chamber rose and in an outburst of emotion gave a long, loud welcome to the Chief of the State. The Socialist ‘Left,’ which had never saluted the King, and on one occasion had adopted an insulting attitude towards him, was not long in showing its agreement with the Sovereign. Suddenly all the representatives of the nation formed themselves in one communion ; distinctions of party and race were wiped out. Men of divergent opinions, who had never wished to know each other, offered the hand of brotherhood. It was a singularly stirring spectacle, a similar spirit enlightened all minds,



one heart beat in every breast, the same inspiration animated all desires ; there was only one mind, one soul,—the Belgian soul.

“Calm, tall and erect, his keen glance fixed upon the representatives of the nation welcoming their Sovereign, upright in the supple beauty of masculine strength, stood the living image of the *Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, drawing his sword in the cause of honour. In firm and resolute accents, without the faintest hesitation or tremor in his voice, H.M. King Albert said to us :

“‘Never since 1830 has a more serious situation threatened Belgium : the integrity of our country is menaced. The strength of our rights, the sympathy which Belgium, proud of her free institutions and moral conquests, has not ceased to enjoy amongst other nations, the indispensability of our independent existence to the balance of power in Europe—all this makes us still hope that the events we fear will not come to pass. But if our hopes be deceived, and it becomes necessary to oppose the invasion of our soil and to defend our threatened homes, this duty, however hard it may be, will find us armed and ready for the most bitter sacrifices.’

“After a greeting to the army, to the youth of the country, ever ready to defend with Belgian coolness their Fatherland, the King said : ‘This is a decisive moment. When I look at this thrilling assembly in which there is but one party—that of the Fatherland—I ask : “Are you firmly determined to maintain intact the sacred inheritance of our ancestors ?”’

“At this moment the Assembly seemed to lose control of itself : hands were raised enthusiastically ;

with voices vibrating with emotion Representatives and Senators cried, 'Yes! yes! we are! Long live the King! Long live Belgium!' It was like a wild hurricane carrying everything before it; from the public benches, where the crowd stamped their approval, to the diplomatic benches, where sat the solemn-looking ministers, came cheers and ovations.

"The King ended his fine speech: 'I have faith,' said he, 'in our destinies; a country which defends itself earns the respect of all; that country will not perish. God will be with us in this just cause. Long live independent Belgium!'

"I refrain from describing the scenes that followed when the King, already dressed for the campaign, remounted his horse at the gates of the National Palace, and passed through the enthusiastic crowd. The acclamations of the people were the prolonged echo of the voice of its representatives. The most notable thing was the nation's unanimity; it was spontaneous and thrilling, proceeding unhesitatingly, unchecked, towards the right solution, that of duty.

"You must not think that the enthusiasm of the moment had blinded the judgment of our parliamentarians. I maintain that each of us at that hour saw clearly the perils to which our votes were committing us; no one had any illusion about the formidable strength and ferocity of the Germans. The money Germany offered us was a temptation: the bargain she wished to conclude in buying our 'friendly neutrality' was a bait; but then it would have been necessary to tear up a contract, repudiate our signature, sell our honour. The fact that she did not hesitate will be the eternal glory of Belgium.

“I have done. I have pleaded before you, in all the sincerity of my heart, the cause of my country, my beloved Belgium. Your applause, your looks, your gestures have told me that it is unnecessary to await your verdict. You will henceforth lay Germany under the ban of civilized nations; to crucified Belgium your sympathies and your hearts go out, and in your eyes I read your admiration of her.”

## CHAPTER XI

As though engaged in the labour of Sisyphus in the infernal regions, the train, recommencing again and again with much panting and groaning, ascended and descended the winding track, rounding the valleys of the South African *karroo*. Indefinite stretches of dappled reddish-brown, with thick, short grass, whence emerged rocky points, with a few stunted trees, cactus, mimosa, spekboom, and mauve, yellow and pink flowers. Here were the kopjes, little isolated pyramids that looked as if they had been turned in a lathe, set flat upon the soil, with quite surprising effect, perfectly conical, and coloured pearl-grey, festooned with green lichen. Far off, behind the solitary kopjes, arose others of greater height, their notched summits sometimes suggesting a ruined feudal tower. They rise in tiers to the horizon, one above the other : here in a half circle, there like a salient, giving the illusion of complicated fortresses. In places in a deep hollow are outlined series of kopjes, as though laid out by rule and line : one might call them the vast encampment of an army of giants. The sun lit up this range, with its play of golden light and violet shade. This strange, unique landscape possessed indescribable solemnity ; each of these kopjes recalls epic struggles and rises like a monolith in honour of a nation of heroes.

At one of the places where we stopped there was a great assemblage of black women. The peculiarity which ordains that the weaker sex should have a wagging tongue is unusually evident under the tropics : no aviary could have rivalled the prattle and chattering of a group of negresses, notwithstanding that their speech is harmonious and as clear as Italian.

A little farther on, during the halt, a Kaffir beauty came to parade herself upon the platform. She wore a dress of glistening white which scarcely reached her knees, standing out vividly against her shining lacquer-coloured limbs and bust ; a light scarf of a strawberry colour drooped from her shoulder like a bandolier. Young, well-made, sure of success, she posed before the compartments reserved for negroes in which these great children are closely confined. From windows and doors came the wild shouts of the blacks expressing their admiration ; they threw money, slices of bread-and-butter, tobacco, a box of sardines. She picked them all up and placed them in her coquettishly raised dress, whilst the negro tumult broke into more ardent and impassioned cries. The train moved on, and the hetaira stood motionless on the platform, her legs straight, her bust protruding, without a gesture, without a smile, laden with presents for which she had sufficiently paid by her short display.

At the Transvaal frontier the secretary of the Administrator of the province boarded the train. He had come to welcome the Belgian Mission the moment it arrived on the territory of the old free

republic. We thanked the Administrator by telegram for the honour of this delicate attention.

The result of our mission in the Orange Free State had not failed to arouse lively anxiety in certain centres of pro-German tendency. A meeting had been convoked at Pretoria for the purpose of arranging the policy to be adopted in regard to the Belgian delegates. But in Africa nothing proceeds quickly. "Time is no object," says a proverb that is not of Belgian origin; the assembly which was to deliberate upon our fate came too late. Our progress, it appeared, was at a rate unknown in Africa; Belgian performances upset all their calculations. On the day fixed for the meeting at Pretoria we had finished the greater part of our itinerary through the Transvaal. A Boer who was behind the scenes confided to me that the meeting had had no markedly hostile feature; the participants recognized that, in face of the reception given the Belgians, it would have been highly impolitic to attempt anything against them; the only practical course was as a last resort to preach to the Boers abstention from our meetings under the pretext that *God save the King* was sung at them. The mere echoes of our speeches, spread broadcast by the Press, had created so much interest that people everywhere manifested a lively desire to see and listen to us.

At Potchefstroom, the cradle of the rebellion, all the rooms at the hotels and inns had been engaged several days before the meeting. The Boers came from about fifteen leagues around, in motor-car or wagon. The District Council received us at dinner, and on the menu—composed in French—

I noted "Tournedos à la Roi Albert," and "Pêches Cardinal Mercier." The meeting was a remarkable success, and it was to the sound of loud cheering that, towards midnight, we regained our saloon carriage, which was to take us to Heidelberg. There, again, an audience of eight hundred gave us enthusiastic ovations, in a country which, a few days previously, had witnessed serious revolutionary scenes, reproduced in the illustrated journals of Capetown on the very day that they contained the portraits of the Belgian delegates.

Twice we were told that the meetings arranged by us must be cancelled for fear of trouble. They took place, all the same, at our urgent entreaty. On alighting in these localities we found the authorities in a state of great uneasiness, but nothing happened beyond a few interruptions, which we met with the utmost politeness; in the end, the interrupters there, as at Harrismith in the Orange Free State, were not the last to applaud us enthusiastically.

Along the route telegrams were continually arriving for us, requesting new meetings. We prolonged our wanderings through the Transvaal for ten days, and would gladly have satisfied all requests: but there are limits to human strength. Already my colleague was suffering from a fever which left him only two months after our return to Europe; but he displayed admirable will power and energy, not sparing himself in his untiring devotion. Often *en route* we found the entire population assembled at the railway station. The Mayor would give us a short address, and from our compartment in the train we improvised a meeting, by arrange-

ment with the station-master, who willingly extended the halt for a few minutes.

More than once we were begged to pay a visit to the schools. The pupils would be assembled, and at our entrance they sang the *Brabançonne* in Flemish ; one of the pupils read something complimentary, and we made a little speech and saluted the applauding children. When the motor-car left the young folk followed us, and the echoes of their shrill voices pursued us for a long distance.

It was in the Transvaal, more especially, that, by paying visits to notable people, we were able to carry on an individual propaganda, and at the same time enter more intimately into the life of the Boer.

The life of the Boer—how serene, opulent, princely it is ! He is sometimes blamed for his over-conservative sentiments, and as being the enemy of novelty and progress. Is it not natural that such should be his attitude ? He lives *en grand seigneur*, in domains with hunting-grounds full of game, and his white-handed daughters in their light toilettes speak plainly enough of their sunny lives as *châtelaines*. On horse or on foot, the Boer makes the tour of his farm once or twice a day, inspects his crops, sees that his negroes are at work, returns to make a hearty meal, and then to sit in the shade of the verandah, in a manner conducive to good digestion, enjoying his coffee, whilst smoking abundant pipes of magalie. When, four times a year, solemnly and slowly he betakes himself to the capital, to attend the “Nachtmaal,” or Communion Service, he goes with his family in a wagon drawn by six



oxen, like an ancient patriarch on whom have been bestowed all the blessings of Israel.

Is it surprising that the Boer should be a politician? It is often thrown at him that, if he attended a little less to politics and a little more to agriculture, the prosperity of South Africa would be increased tenfold. There is some truth in this. If the African Boer, following the example of his Flemish colleague, confined himself to politics during the month preceding the elections, and returned on the morrow to his live-stock and crops, assuredly the agricultural returns would show the effects very plainly. One must always steer clear of exaggeration; the Boer is not indifferent to progress, he tries to keep pace with science, the agricultural schools instruct the young people. In this country, where nothing moves quickly (except the Belgian Mission! said a Boer to me), progress is slow. If, as with us, agricultural engineers travelled about, giving addresses and practical instruction everywhere, there can be no doubt but that great benefit would result. Moreover, we have seen on more than one farm antiseptic plant for rendering cattle non-labile to infection, and other interesting inventions. Care for irrigation gives scope for the most ingenious appliances.

Drought is the great agricultural scourge of this country. Sometimes it destroys the best of the crops two years running. But under this grand sun one good year suffices to make the inhabitants forget two bad ones. The day the irrigation problem is solved the Transvaal will become a marvellous and abundant granary. Similarly, when the great mineral resources tend to become exhausted and have fulfilled

their initial part in the history of the colony, agriculture, the great food-producing industry, will be the definite basis of economic enterprise in South Africa.

Live-stock is the Boer's constant preoccupation. He works untiringly to improve it. A single instance will tell with what success ;—the exportation of wool represented, in 1908, a value of two and a half million pounds, and in 1913 a value of six million pounds. In these figures Belgian purchases from the Boers account for a hundred thousand pounds in 1908, and five hundred thousand pounds in 1913.

One day at a farm a Boer showed us some sheep with firm and curly wool, for which he had paid at the rate of two hundred pounds a head. "These," said he, "are my fortune." Truly this man worshipped his business.

"How can one fail to love it," he exclaimed, "when one gets two crops of potatoes a year, seven crops of lucerne, and the cattle are fat and perfectly healthy?" After showing us his horses, cows, sheep and pigs, he took us to his home, where his wife, graceful and lissom, but rather stout,—as are all the pretty women in this country,—had tea ready for us. The *salon* was full of neighbours dressed in light toilettes of the latest fashion ; they were the wives of various farmers in the neighbourhood. We installed ourselves in the verandah, which commanded a delightful landscape. In the background Basutoland, with its triple range of mountains, rose higher and higher, the last range attaining an altitude of eleven thousand feet, and showing all the warm and vivid colour of an alpine horizon. Nearer us

were some kopjes, always quaint features, interesting smaller editions, as it were, of Table Mountain. Then the farm, flourishing and verdant, and its fat cattle and fine horses. The tea circulated, dispensed by the mistress of the house, who had within reach an enormous tray held by a woman as black as pitch and dressed in a short skirt displaying elephantine legs. Her bare arms were loaded with bracelets, twisted like serpents from wrists to biceps. She had a fantastic head, bright eyes and thick lips. Before my eyes was clearly proved the sovereignty of the one over the other as I watched them side by side,—the imposing negress with the mechanical movements of an animal unconsciously submissive, and the pretty, fair woman, elegant, *spirituelle*, hospitable.

In this country negresses dress smartly, and on market days have a sort of holiday look. I remember three beauties I met in the street:—one all in pink, with a white turban on her head; another in a lilac dress and yellow turban; and the third wearing a copper-coloured dress with turban to match. Sometimes the young negroes have pearl-grey suits, yellow boots, straw hats tilted a little to one side, a cigarette between their lips, and a stick in the hand. They have worked for months in the gold-mines of Johannesburg, and on coming out equipped themselves at the best outfitter of the metropolis. For a while they keep up a good appearance: when all their savings are spent, and they no longer have the means of charming the negresses, they will return to the depths of the mines.

In some regions a brightly-coloured blanket, *made*

*in Belgium*, is the sole garment, and that one is badly and often incompletely fastened.

One day, when a thunderstorm was threatening, I saw two negresses in the open road quickly take off their blankets, roll them up as best they could so that they should not get wet, and pursue their way, facing the storm in the costume of Eve.

Rain in Africa attains the dimensions of an aquatic show ; falling not in drops, but in long continuous threads, the water precipitates itself in torrents down roads leading to gulleys, where, in less than no time, imposing rivers, cutting off all communication, are created.

In the Transvaal we were the objects of stirring demonstrations of generosity and support. At Witbank, a village containing seventeen hundred labourers, all miners, whither we had gone out of respect for the working population, they gave us a magnificent reception. So many people of the neighbourhood came to the meeting that we had an audience of seven hundred. The Mayor announced to us that the workmen of Witbank had pledged themselves to subscribe a thousand pounds to the fund for helping Belgians who were under the German yoke. You should have seen the eager enthusiasm which these noble fellows showed in their desire to carry through this act of generosity ! Before our departure for Europe I was informed of the despatch of a first payment of a thousand pounds, collected for my dear countrymen in this humble African village.

In addition to the addresses we received personally, we were the objects of a thousand kind attentions.

I keep as souvenirs the addresses drawn up in the Flemish language and superbly illuminated, offered by the local bodies with a cordiality the memory of which will never leave me. Small details go to prove a touching delicacy of feeling ; e.g. just as we were leaving, the Mayor and members of the District Council presented us with an address embellished with a water-colour sketch, in which, surrounded by mauve pansies, were inset the arms of Belgium, the tricolour flag, and a dove holding an olive-branch. The address ran as follows—

“To the most distinguished and honourable Messieurs Standaert and Van der Perre, members of the Belgian Parliament and delegates of the people of Belgium.

“Most honoured Sirs,

“The undersigned, representing the citizens of Volksrust, desire to express to you their most cordial good wishes. They are convinced that your mission will arouse expressions of sympathy in the South African Union, and that you will carry away from this country the kindest and most pleasant of memories, as well as the satisfaction of feeling that success has crowned your efforts.

“W. Sutherland, Mayor ; J. Bartho, J. de Wet, J. W. Steenkamp, Theo. Joostens. . . .”

In a little village, the population of which consists of two thousand coal-miners and their families, the Socialist Mayor, attended by his District Council, met us at the station, addressing us simply as

follows : "You will find only a few humble colliers in this district, but their hearts beat so thoroughly in unison with yours that they have spontaneously decided to contribute to your fund for the relief of the Belgians three per cent. of their wages until the end of the war." I must confess that this simple speech touched me to such a degree, that at the moment I could say nothing, and tears came to my eyes. I seized the horny hand of the Mayor with both my own, and pressed it warmly and heartily. The crowd echoed the sincerity of this dumb response with rousing cheers.

I call to mind a young Boer of sixteen—this was in a hot rebel centre—accosting me at the end of a meeting. In his bold glance there still shone the emotion aroused by the recital of atrocities committed in Belgium. "Sir," he said to me, "I am not rich, but here are ten shillings ; I beg you to accept them for your poor Flemish brothers." When I protested, much moved, saying that the Belgian Delegates were not out for money, and that his relations might not approve of his liberality, "Oh," he replied, "my mother is down there ; she doesn't know anything, but ask her." We joined her, and I explained in a few words to the good woman what had happened, whereupon, warmly embracing her son, she cried, *Paultje, wat is dat toch schoon !* ("My little Paul, how noble of you !"), and turning to me added, "Accept it, sir, I beg of you ; he has saved the money himself."

In one mining village the population, numbering scarcely four thousand souls, gave twelve hundred pounds to the Belgian Relief Fund. An improvised

collection at the end of a meeting produced thirty-two pounds. And in the evening, on regaining our saloon carriage, we found it festooned with garlands and flowers, a simple and charming act of homage on the part of the workmen's wives to the envoys from Belgium.

## CHAPTER XII

THE first thing we did, on arriving at Pretoria, where we were the guests of the city, was to go to the headquarters of the Government, to pay our respects to the Ministers.

The official buildings of South Africa are remarkable for their luxurious and imposing character ; the choice of a site in many cases contributes to enhance the architecture. Pretoria, situated at an altitude of four thousand five hundred feet, is surrounded by green hills and romantic glens. The palace of the Union rises well in view upon one of these eminences. Flights of steps and landings with open balustrades form a truly majestic approach to the large semi-circular, one-storey building. A graceful colonnade curves all along the façade, which bounds a terrace, the view from which commands a fine panorama over the town and its rich setting. Two square towers, with Corinthian columns supporting a dome, flank the extremities. The whole does honour to its African architects, and justifies the remark of Lord Grey : " This amphitheatre is more than magnificent, it is unique." Within, the wings of the building project perpendicularly to the façade, each being occupied by the offices of a Minister and the divisions of his department. Projecting at the right-hand end is the



Governor General's office, at the left-hand end that of the Premier. On three sides a splendid view may be obtained.

The Ministers do not have their private dwellings at the palace; an annual salary of three thousand pounds enables them to live in town. Moreover, they are obliged to leave the capital for the greater part of the year, during the parliamentary session, the seat of which is at Capetown, a two days' railway journey from Pretoria. The Ministers are necessarily members either of the Volksraad or of the Senate, because, out of respect for parliamentary tradition, Article 14 of the Constitution stipulates that no Minister may remain in office unless he belongs to one or the other of these two Chambers.

The present Ministers of the South African Union, with the exception of one who is English, are of Boer origin. At first sight this appears inexplicable; it is a perfectly simple result of the wide liberties usual in the colonial policy of Great Britain. Since the year 1909, South Africa has been endowed with a Constitution, "Zuid Afrika Wet," in virtue of which the different colonies, hitherto separate—the Cape, Natal, the Transvaal and Orange Free State—are united in a single Parliamentary Union of which they form the four provinces. In this Union, by the terms of Article 4 of the basic law, the Government and the Chambers have full power and authority. A Governor-General represents the King within the Union; the Constitution fixes his annual salary at £10,000. The exercise of legislative power belongs to the King, to the Senate, and to the Chamber. To be elected member

one must (*a*) be a constituent, (*b*) have resided for at least five years in the colony, (*c*) be a British subject of European origin. The duration of the office is five years. The senators and representatives receive four hundred pounds a year, reduced by a sum of three pounds for each day they are absent from the sittings of the Chamber or of the Commissions of which they form part. In order of precedence the Chamber ranks before the Senate ; when the two Houses join in one,—which happens whenever it is necessary to decide a dispute between the Senate and the Volksraad,—the Speaker of the Chamber presides. The Parliament has full power to vote all laws in the interests of the peace, order and right government of the Union. The Constitution, by Article 137, proclaims the equality of languages in the following terms : “English and Dutch are the official languages of the Union. They are regarded as equal, and both enjoy the same liberty, rights and privileges.”

This fusion of the British Colonies of South Africa resulted in the election of a Parliament in which the Dutch element obtained the majority, and the Union was placed under the direction of a Boer Government,—even Natal, a province almost exclusively British, as well as the Cape, which, since the *Groote Trek*, had always been governed by Afrikaners of English extraction.

The Ministers gave us a cordial reception. They are a body of very intelligent men, with whom we had a most interesting interview. They invited us to luncheon at their club, where our conversation was continued at table. The Ministers spoke Dutch, or rather Flemish, and it was a strange experience

to be taking refreshment in company with the governors of the great African Colony, chatting away as though we were in the heart of Flanders. The gentleman who sat next me at table, Mr. Nikolas J. De Wet, Minister of Justice, is in the full meaning of the expression what the English call "a clever man," intelligent and very sympathetic, and one of the most distinguished members of the Government.

The task imposed on a Minister of Justice of the Union may well be imagined. The four provinces are so many formally independent states; each has its own legislation, involving frequently hopeless intricacies and contradictions in legal arrangements. To bring unity or harmony into this chaos is the end pursued; only a man of wide views, endowed with great common sense, could succeed in such a task.

General Smuts, who, in the absence of General Botha, has control of the Government, is a man of keen intellect, gifted with a quickness of comprehension,—which appears in his strangely mobile and very light blue eyes,—a judicial mind of the first order, and a bearing at once simple and resolute. Curious about everything concerning the administration of a country, his way is to put brief and precise questions, going straight to the heart of the problem he wishes to solve. Legislation in regard to taxation has no secrets for him, and he asked searching questions on the taxation system in vogue throughout Belgium. It would be impossible to have too high an opinion of this very fair, animated little man, who is an eminent lawyer, a skilful and energetic general, and a political organizer of the first rank.

Pretoria is a city of pleasant aspect, with wide

well-shaded avenues. Its monuments are numerous; there is an atmosphere of prosperity and comfort about the place. But all this forms somewhat of a contrast with that perfect calm, that absence of stir and animation, which surprise one in the capital of a country.

Knowing how interested I was in questions of penal law, the Minister of Justice very obligingly arranged for me to pay a visit to the Solitary System Prison of Pretoria. This is a vast enclosure, covering twenty acres and containing two hundred cells for six hundred prisoners. As a matter of fact, they have abandoned the system of rigorous isolation by allotting three prisoners to one cell. The director told me that the experiment, which has been scarcely a year in operation, is deplorable: there is hardly any system but one which is capable of reforming convicts, and that is the adoption of complete isolation. This seemed evident to me, and the director strongly approved of the remark I made,—that three in a cell is worse than the system of leaving them all together, which at least allows of mutual surveillance of the prisoners. The prison at Pretoria is not built in the traditional wheel shape but is semi-circular. The Governor showed me the type of cell in his opinion suitable for a single convict—it was exactly the same kind as those in the prison of Louvain, except for a certain arrangement of grating, which one lowers in front of the entrance to the cell, when leaving the door open,—an improvement allowing of better ventilation and the constant renewal of air, even while the prisoner remains shut in. About the prison there are remarkably well organized workshops, where

work is done for the benefit of the State,—binding official documents, doing Government printing, and making boots for the army. There is also a button factory, in which bones from the kitchen are used : in a word, all trades are represented.

In a retired wing is the gibbet. The place is small—hardly twenty persons could get into it. Only the Governor of the prison, a magistrate and a doctor are present at executions. Within sixty seconds of the condemned man leaving his cell, which is adjoining, the execution is over. The rope, attached to a large post, is fastened round his neck by means of a catch ; a plank falls, the unfortunate man is hurled into space, and dies instantaneously. The penalty of the gallows seems less cruel, and more expeditious, than beheading on the scaffold.

While going through the prison workshops I learned that two of my compatriots were amongst the six hundred occupants of the establishment. Both were sentenced for the same crime—selling alcohol to negroes. This misdeed is punished very severely. One of the Belgians was condemned to five years' imprisonment, the other to three years'. It is needless to speak of their surprise at seeing a fellow-citizen, who did not fail to give them some sound advice ; with tears in their voice they promised never to repeat their crime. Before leaving I ventured to beg for their pardon, nor did my petition fall upon deaf ears. That day I experienced one of the greatest joys that can comfort the heart of man ; I had made two fellow-creatures happy.

In one of the smaller avenues of Pretoria stands the dwelling occupied by Kruger when President.

It is a long, low, one-storeyed house, like a modest hunting-box, covered with corrugated iron, fronted all its length by a "stoep" level with the street. Old eucalyptus trees overhang and shade the roof; two large couchant lions in white marble, the gift of a fervent admirer, lie to right and left of the entrance, and afford a certain unexpected relief to the Kruger Palace. Inside, separated by a corridor, are a large dining-room on one side, on the other a huge room, a sort of hall, the four corners of which were respectively the President's office, *salon*, reception room, and antechamber. Such are the simple and patriarchal surroundings in which the daily life of the first magistrate of the South African Republic was passed.

At the present time—touching thought—the hall has been transformed into a memorial chapel. In the middle is a catafalque, hidden beneath flowers and wreaths, whilst the walls are covered with a heaped mass of funereal souvenirs. There are some from all countries, even the most remote, and I noticed with emotion the red, yellow, and black ribbons that had come from distant Belgium, with their faded inscriptions in Flemish.

Kruger was a personaliy of great interest, that simple, rugged statesman, of little education, brought up in the school of trial and self-help, who, in the course of a romantic career, found himself constantly at grips with the refined, polished, subtle diplomacy of old Europe. And yet no one seemed worse suited for contests demanding subtlety and skill than that rough and solidly built Boer, Paul Kruger, with his tall stature, and a beard that fringed his face, reminding one exactly of the tall

and stout, gentle, slow and dreamy type of Dutch sailor.

His was a strange destiny ! He was quite young at the legendary epoch of the *Groote Trek*, that is, the general exodus of the Afrikanders then inhabiting the provinces of the Cape, which had become English since 1815,—the Cape, enriched by the plantations and agriculture of Dutch ancestors, and which the Boer, in his unquenchable thirst for independence and liberty, suddenly judged to be uninhabitable. Desiring to be their own lords and masters, the Boers emigrated in thousands northwards, to the unknown, the “bush,” in heavy wagons drawn by sixteen oxen. In endless convoys they went away, carrying their household gods, to raise for them new altars on a virgin soil and beneath a free sky.

Paul Kruger was ten years old in 1835, when his father and mother with their children, and twenty servants composing the agricultural staff, bade adieu to their rich farm of Colesberg. Driving before them thirty thousand head of sheep, and about a hundred horses and oxen, through the picturesque valleys and verdant hills of the Cape, they set off, never to return, indulging in no vain regret, travelling farther and farther towards the north, to the other side of the Orange River, beyond the river Caledon.

During this long and hard pilgrimage, Paul Kruger and his brothers, assisted by the servants, had as their duty to watch over their father's flocks and keep them together. This explains why, more than once, when in the company of those who boasted of their good birth, he made the rejoinder :

"As for me, I am the son of a peasant and have tended flocks."

After long journeyings, Kruger's relations encamped in the wild region situated on the further side of the Vaal River. Other Boers followed in hundreds and hundreds, drawn in huge sixteen-ox wagons, and preceded by innumerable sheep and horses. They also established themselves in the Vaal country—and this district became the Transvaal.

Very soon the heads of families united in a Constituent Assembly, and drew up some essential and simple laws. These involved two principles :—respect for the private property of the natives, and the prohibition of slavery.

Tragic phases marked the first few years of the trekkers' life—incessant struggles against savages, Selikat and the Matabeles, Dingaana and the Zulus, Setcheli and the Bechuanas, Mapela the slaughterer of the whites and the Kaffirs, Masai and the Basutos—epic, incessant struggles which made the Boers a race of splendid fighters.

From the age of fourteen years Paul Kruger, with his relatives by his side, fired at the enemy from behind the rampart of linked wagons, while the Boer women encouraged them, and loaded the guns. At sixteen years of age he marched at the head of an assault upon the kraal of Selikat and took it, finding among the booty an enormous quantity of property and cattle belonging to the trekkers.

What, amid all these vicissitudes, the education of Paul Kruger consisted of may easily be guessed. After each meal, for an hour, morning and evening, the parents taught their children to read. They read in turn a passage from Holy Scripture, which



they had to repeat from memory and to write out. At rare intervals some chance itinerant teacher would give them lessons for a few days.

At the age of sixteen, Paul Kruger, like all the sons of the trekkers, had the right to choose two farms, one for pasturage, the other for cultivation ; thus all his time was absorbed by cares of war and of agriculture.

At seventeen he married Mademoiselle Gésina Wilhelmina du Plessis, who—a constant tradition amongst the Boers—presented him with a numerous family. He had sixteen children—nine boys and seven girls.

The trekkers had to fight, not only against the savage tribes, but against the wild animals of every kind that infested the country. Not a day passed without carnivorous beasts raiding the flocks. Hunting was as much a necessity as it was a recreation and a sport ; hence the perfectly justified reputation enjoyed by the Boers of being first-rate shots.

Paul Kruger was a famous hunter ; sureness of aim and *sang-froid* are the principal qualities that made him celebrated and popular in the region of the Vaal. He killed his first lion when he was fourteen. His father and elder brothers were hunting big game, whilst he remained behind taking care of the horses. The hunters having missed a lion, the animal in its fury sprang in the direction of the horses, but young Kruger was armed, and the moment the beast made his leap a well-aimed shot stretched him stiff and dead at the youth's feet. This exploit moved him so little, and he kept so calm, that, when his father and brother hurried towards him at the sound of the report, by way

of a joke he suddenly pressed his foot on the belly of the lion, which—a phenomenon known to hunters—gave forth so formidable a roar that his father's servant fell down in a faint. Kruger never hunted except with very good horses, and took only one companion with him. Hippopotami, antelopes, lions, tigers, and buffaloes were his favourite sport. One day, a lion having attacked one of his flocks, he set out, resolved to avenge his property. Next day, he returned dragging behind him, in addition to some wild beasts of a less noble species, two superb lionesses.

Some of his hunting exploits were wonderful. More than once he owed his safety to flight; he boasted, moreover, of being able to run like a rabbit. One day he allowed a rhinoceros to approach within a few yards in order that he might take good aim, and his gun missed fire. Not having time to fire the second barrel, he ran away at full speed, without, however, dropping his gun. As he ran, he stumbled and fell; the rhinoceros was about to trample him to death, when, quick as lightning, Kruger turned over on to his back, fired his second shot, hitting right in the heart the formidable creature, which just missed crushing him as it fell.

Are these hunting stories coloured by that imagination so characteristic of hunters of all countries? Such does not appear to be the case, and Kruger had an art of telling them that made listening a delight to all who were intimate with him. There is one hunting tale especially, which, at the time when he was President, served to mystify a noble ambassador, whose particular mission caused Kruger a certain degree of embarrassment. The departure

of this important personage was irrevocably fixed for a certain day, and a decisive explanation was to take place at a friendly dinner given the evening before, at the presidential bungalow. Never had Kruger been so talkative ; the guest was a great hunter, and his host treated him to hunters' tales in abundance. The guest, however, finding the hour for taking leave approaching, resolutely solicited a reply to the subject of his mission, when Kruger exclaimed : "Very well, Your Excellency, but just listen to this. One day I was hunting an elephant ; at the moment I considered propitious, I fired ; my first shot missed, the second went off, but only succeeded in wounding the thick-skin, which suddenly became furious. The elephant, a superb specimen, over sixteen feet high, charged, trumpeting so loudly as to set the forest ringing with echoes,—for I was in a virgin forest, with vegetation so dense and entangled that it was useless even to think of breaking away either to right or to left, so impenetrable was the undergrowth. My only means of safety was what had so often served me—flight. I had no other way to choose but the road ; and so I scampered off like a hare, followed by the elephant, which was trumpeting behind me. I kept but a short distance between us, continually testing the margins to see if I could turn down anywhere. Alas ! in vain. And then, at a bend of the road, which stretched out in front of me, straight, indefinite, between two walls of lianes, scarcely two hundred yards distant, in that cat-like attitude, that posture of attack I know so well, crouched a lion, with bristling mane. I felt petrified ; I made a sudden involuntary pause in my maddened course.

Heavens! What was I to do? There was no time to reflect. The elephant also arrived at the bend of the road; whether he perceived me to be nearer, or the sight of the lion had excited his rage, I do not know; but, trumpeting in a manner that would have brought down the walls of Jericho, he quickened his pace, making the soil groan beneath his formidable weight. The lion was already in a crouching attitude, pawing the ground for a leap, his eyes ablaze. Then, having no other alternative to the jaws of the lion and the elephant's trunk, I made a supreme effort, and, obeying one of those inspirations that only despair can—"Some one here knocked loudly at the dining-room door—at President Kruger's it was the custom to knock and enter. The Secretary of State came forward, the President was wanted immediately upon an important matter of great urgency. Kruger rose, excused himself, and the diplomatist had to leave. History does not say whether he was the more concerned at the unsatisfactory result of his mission, or at not having heard the end of the hunting adventure.

This is a short sketch of the man who for forty years was *generalissimo* of the armies of the Transvaal, and who, at fifty years of age, undertook, and for a quarter of a century bore, the heavy responsibility of a most burdensome rule, in the most disturbed of republics. Horseman, hunter, farmer, always riding, hunting, fighting, tilling the soil,—how well this represents the Boer's existence, enamoured of the open air and freedom of movement as much as of independence; loving a turbulent and

adventurous life as much as his fireside, his wife, his children, his live-stock. If Paul Kruger, as has been said, had by force of the above-mentioned circumstances a very imperfect education, he nevertheless found in the inherited characteristics of the Boer race—prudence, mistrust and shrewdness—something that enabled him to prove himself a match for the complexities and subtleties of the Chancelleries. He has been represented as wanting in frankness, as not going straight to his end. Was it not his duty to distrust the limited means at his disposal, and was a waiting policy not an elementary precaution, in view of safeguarding the superior interests entrusted to him? It is scarcely my province to criticize or to discuss the politician or his career, both of which became subsequently so well known throughout the world.

When, in 1885, Kruger was for the second time elected President of the Republic, he outlined his political programme as follows: Development of agriculture and trade; reform of education; extension of railroads towards the sea; measures for preventing the immigration of foreigners (except the Dutch), with a view to preventing the Boers from being overwhelmed by extra-national elements. It is easy to perceive that this last object was the dark cloud that harbingers the storm, the standing cause of conflict with the English. These last maintained that, in spite of their great numbers, and even after a long residence in the land, they found themselves excluded from all political rights, and the English language proscribed, the *Taal* being the only tongue recognized in business transactions and in the markets.

On different occasions, the Boer representatives of liberal ideas were willing to restore political equality and equality of language, but, Kruger not being of their opinion, the projects fell through. I was told an original anecdote on this subject. Two brothers, Jan and Piet Polvlieg, were members of the Transvaal Parliament—the Volksraad. Jan, having set down a motion suppressing the exclusive privilege of the *Taal*, and allowing liberty of language, saw his motion rejected by only a few votes, after a violent speech “against” by his brother Piet, who had concluded with this inflamed aphorism: “My country is my country, and my language is my language.” A few months after, Jan Polvlieg saw his brother coming towards his house in a very agitated manner. “I am come,” said he, “to ask your advice. Our dear Paultje, my son, who, you know, is in the railway service, writes to inform me that he is horrified to find that promotion will be impossible for him, because he knows only the *Taal*, and English is indispensable for the mail and correspondence. Paultje’s letter is so heart-broken that I do not know how to answer it; I beg you to give me your advice.” Jan Polvlieg remained a moment plunged in deep thought; then, raising his head, he replied: “What to say to him? If I were you, Piet, I should answer Paultje quite cheerfully, ‘Men land is men land, and men taal is men taal!’” (“My country is my country, and my language is my language.”)

It was at this time—1885—that the gold-fields of the Rand were discovered, which were destined, in a few years’ time, to bring abundance and wealth to the Transvaal, but which drew these prophetic

words from General Joubert : "Why congratulate ourselves on these discoveries ? this gold will one day cause waves of blood to flow." Fifteen years later the prediction was realized.

The young and gracious Wilhelmina of Holland sent the cruiser *Gelderland* to meet old Kruger, who embarked as an exile, bidding farewell to that Transvaal which had been created by his exertions, and which he was never to see again.

There remains of President Kruger this house of mourning, to which all the nations of the world have sent their immortelles, their mauve pansies ; this sombre funeral chapel, which haunts one like a nightmare. On leaving it, when one lifts one's face in the luminous and invigorating atmosphere of the Transvaal, one sees on a lofty pedestal the statue of the President,—his form of massive corpulence ; his long hair merging into his beard ; his broad, bent back, his hat on the back of his head ; his breast crossed by the presidential scarf, embroidered in four colours, a scarf which is kept as a treasure in the Museum of Pretoria. Facing this is the cemetery, where, under the shadow of cypress trees, the mortal remains of Paul Kruger, brought from Holland, are laid in mother earth, beneath a simple slab of black marble, surrounded by a white bust with this inscription : *Stephanus Johannes Paul Kruger in leven Staats President der Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, geboren 11 October, 1825, overleden 14 Juli, 1904.*" In the three stations of this pilgrimage there were so many things of such grandeur and sadness that we look back upon it with a sense of oppression, lost in melancholy recollection.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE meeting at Pretoria will, by reason of its stirring character, remain one of the principal memories of our mission in South Africa. Pretoria, a lively centre, always somewhat excited by Transvaal nationalism, might have been the theatre of a tumultuous meeting, fertile in incidents. But the most impulsive people there were still astounded at the result of our mission in the Orange Free State. I had been warned that the presence of the Ministers, appearing for the first time in public since the repression of the rebellion, might bring about hostile manifestations ; but there were none. All the Ministers did us the honour of escorting us to the platform, and one of them, Mr. Malan, Minister of Mines, a most sympathetic man, agreed to preside over the meeting. The hearty speech in which he introduced us to the public was received with general approval.

It is my duty here to thank the Government of the Union for this token of warm sympathy shown to Belgium.

We were in a veritable nest of disaffected people, among whom prejudice against Belgium and pro-German sentiments had taken deep root. Dr. Van der Perre, who was particularly eloquent, tried, like myself, to refute the most specious arguments, and



show up the Germans in their true colours. Our success surpassed all hopes. Would that it had been possible to communicate to our dear compatriots in Belgium some faint echo of our enthusiastic reception by this kind and sympathetic population of Pretoria.

Below is my speech. The part referring to German atrocities was freely interrupted by exclamations of indignation and horror.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Twelve years ago, there was assembled in the vast ‘Halles’ of the ancient town of Bruges an immense crowd, immense in the number of listeners and unanimous in sentiment. I was present and saw mounting the platform, amid loud cheers, tall, handsome men, delegates come from the Transvaal and from Pretoria. In a language we all knew, they said, ‘War, that horrible scourge, has fallen upon us; the Boers of the Transvaal have no longer a roof to shelter them, nor clothes to cover them; we come to you, our brethren by race, to tell you our distress!’ In that town, and soon afterwards throughout Flanders, there was a superb outburst of sympathy, a declaration of support, in which the wealthy, the townsman, the workman and the humble maid-servant vied with one another in charity and generosity.

“The enthusiastic greetings we have received here, these popular demonstrations of boundless enthusiasm—I hear them in anticipation, I recognize them by their accents of profound emotion, and warm cordiality—they are the echo of what I heard twelve years ago, resounding from the Transvaal right into Flanders, and from Flanders back into

the Transvaal, the echo of that fraternal and touching support which across the seas unites men of the same language and the same blood.

“And now to the horrible evils inherent in war our enemy has added impious vandalism and all the atrocities of barbarism. Not content with that, he is bent upon defaming and dishonouring us. Germany, after heaping upon her victim the most abominable insults, is still determined to vilify us before the world, to sully the honour of our name by slander and misrepresentation. I have often heard, in Africa, Belgium reproached with lack of conscience and with political incapacity in going to war when nothing obliged them to do so ; followed by that infamous lie about the cruelty of the Belgians, and conduct quite unworthy of a civilized people. Do you not see that there is something frightful, humiliating and intolerable in these reproaches directed against a small people, who are loyal and peace-loving, who from the industrial, economic, or commercial point of view were surpassed by none of the continental nations of Europe ? We are sprung from the same stock, we speak the same language, we cherish a mutual love : are our African brothers to blush for us ? Do you not see that we come to defend here not only our honour but also the whole of our future ?

“Thanks be to God, truth has its rights. From South to North of the Union the acclamations of you loyal people prove that the Teutons will reap from this campaign of lying and cunning only the dishonour of having attempted it.

“As I have shown elsewhere, and you have read

in the papers, so I need hardly to refer to it this evening, that, from the point of view of European International Law, as well as from that of binding obligations and honour, it was impossible for the Belgian nation, without committing suicide, to allow its neutrality to be violated by Germany. The attitude of Belgium towards the Kaiser would, in identical conditions, have been the same towards England or France, for there is but one way of behaving honestly.

“Would you know how the policy of the Belgian Government was regarded by the Swiss, a people whose international situation approximates most nearly to our own?

“Listen to what was written in a Swiss newspaper friendly to the Germans, the *Bunder Tageblatt*: ‘We admire Germany for her culture and the prestige of her power, but, alas! the attack launched against the independence of Belgium will for all time remain a shameful page in the history of Germany. This crime will never be forgiven her.’

“Another organ of the Confederation, the *Basler Nachrichten*, published the following: ‘The demand of Germany to be allowed to cross Belgium with her armies could not be entertained for a moment. Throughout German Switzerland public sentiment is unanimous in maintaining that the attitude of Belgium is altogether above criticism; there can be no two opinions on the subject. The Belgians ought to be considered heroes for having defended their independence so valiantly with their small army. The Swiss, with their better organized army, would have done the same; otherwise, any one might have said of them that they were not worth a rap. The

whole of Switzerland blames Germany for the crime committed against Belgium, and the Germans realize this so thoroughly that they are trying by every means in their power to whitewash themselves. Germany's manifold excuses are but a proof of her crime. Proof that Belgium would have violated her neutrality without being invaded has not been provided, and probably never will be. And so the crime committed against Belgium will remain in history as the greatest wrong that Germany has ever committed.'

"The *Zweiserische Rundschau* in its turn says : 'The arguments Germany invokes to exculpate herself as regards Belgium are worthless. Every Swiss has the most heartfelt sympathy with the unhappy little nation that has behaved so heroically. It is in reality for us that the Belgians have shed their blood while fighting for the rights and liberties of a neutral nation.'

"Will any one say that the language of the Swiss shows political incapacity ?

"And has not that little nation, Holland, which you love as a mother, declared that she meant to defend the integrity of her frontiers with all her might ? There will never be two opinions on this subject. If Belgium had forfeited her honour for the benefit of Germany, she would have lost the right of contributing to the balance of power in Europe, and would have disappeared for ever from the map of Europe. Her high-souled struggle for right against might merits, in addition to the world's admiration, a future of assured independence and liberty.

"The campaign of calumny pursued against us

in Africa by agents in the pay of Germany had for its object not merely to make people believe that Belgium, owing to some political incompetence or other, was alone responsible for the evils that have befallen her ; its aim above all else was to vilify us. The world's sympathies were to be diverted from us, and more especially must we be made hateful to you by denunciations of the Belgians as degenerate, inhuman creatures, capable of the most abominable atrocities. Hence those infamous stories spread here about Belgian murderers, Belgian *francs-tireurs*, Belgian women gouging out the eyes of prisoners and of wounded men. The Germans have never been able to prove that there was a partisan war in Belgium. I formally deny such an allegation. The truth is that, on the urgent instructions of the Government and the district Administrations, civilians handed over their arms to the Burgomasters. I, myself, who possessed a rifle only, harmless enough, in obedience to orders repaired to the Government House, and delivered up my weapon. Everywhere, in the cellars of town halls, were heaped up firearms deposited by civilians. That there may have been some exceptions, that here and there might be found an isolated case of a civilian firing on a soldier is possible ; I grant it without requiring proof. But The Hague Convention signed by Germany is precise : no collective chastisement may be inflicted on populations on account of the acts of single individuals. What is certain is that the *franc-tireur* war, of which Germany made a strong point, was a pure invention, a miserable expedient devised to excuse her crime.

“Numerous witnesses affirm that, when the desire

of pillage obsessed the German soldiers, a shot fired by one or the other was a signal for the onslaught. Houses were sacked and their furniture stolen, under the pretext that civilians had opened fire. After pillage came incendiarism, no doubt to obliterate all trace of the violence committed. Many soldiers were provided with syringes, incendiary pastilles and grenades intended to make the fire spread quickly. Can the German staff explain why the Kaiser's soldiers were provided with this incendiary apparatus? The last post from Europe brought me the report of the commission of inquiry established in France, in the territories freed by the victory of the Marne. It is astonishing to learn that the very crimes committed in Belgium were repeated in France in the same fashion, as though they were the work of a superior control, a single command.

"Dealing with the matter of the *francs-tireurs*, here is an instance taken from the deposition of the French *curé* of a parish occupied by Germans: 'I was talking in the street with the German Commandant, when we heard a gunshot . . . ' *Monsieur le curé*,' said the Commandant, 'some one is firing on our men: that is enough to cause the whole parish to be set on fire!' 'Commandant,' I replied, 'I call you to witness that the report we have just heard came from a German rifle, which is easily distinguished by its peculiar dull, heavy sound, which both you and I recognise quite easily.' An hour later the village was sacked, the furniture stolen, the houses burnt and a number of unfortunate victims killed.'

"Nothing equals the cynicism of the Germans when confronted by the terrible accusations brought

against them. A professor of the Berlin University writes to a Dutch paper, *De Amsterdammer*, dated September 29, 1914: 'Germany need not blush for any of her acts; the level of civilization to which she has attained places her above all calumny. They claim that our soldiers burned the town of Louvain; that is not true; at Louvain they simply burned the house of some assassins.' One is stupefied by such audacity! You yourselves have seen with your own eyes, in the films of the cinema, the horrible ravages committed in the ancient University city. Is it likely that the temple of science, the celebrated library of the old *Alma Mater*, was a house of assassins? Was that superb collegiate church, the *Maison de Dieu*, the house of an assassin? The crime of Louvain will lay Germany for ever under a curse. And vain are the repeated attempts made to excuse such a deed. Here, again, as always, the Kaiser's soldiers pretend that the civilians of Louvain had organized themselves as *francs-tireurs*, and this time they say they have undeniable proof of it. A witness, whose good faith cannot be contested, Father Hyacinthe Parys, Prior of the Dominican Fathers, affirms under oath that he saw the civilians of Louvain fire on the German soldiers: one can well understand how the newspapers on the other side of the Rhine regarded this authorized evidence. Now, the Belgian Government, by the last mail which has just come in, sends me a letter which the Dominican prior has addressed to them, and which says: 'I deny most emphatically the statements spread by the German Press. Neither the Dominican Fathers, nor I myself, saw the civilians of Louvain, even a single one of them, fire on the

enemy's soldiers ; we are convinced that nothing of the kind happened here. I have made this formal declaration before a German magistrate, and the Dominican Fathers have done the same. It is utterly false, as the Fathers of the convent and I myself can testify ; there was not a single hostile act to lay to the charge of a civilian of Louvain.' It is ever the same weapons that the Teuton policy wields—lying, calumny, forgery. This letter throws a strong light upon the efforts made by official Germany to exculpate herself. Investigations take place, Belgians are called upon as witnesses,—God knows by what pressure or intimidation,—and nothing is gained, not a grain of truth. In order to get any results they are compelled to pervert and falsify the evidence received.

“A few days ago the Swiss journal, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, reproduced the report of a German architect sent to Louvain to make a statement upon the district. Here, at all events, the ravages committed are recognized, but the report adds, ‘the conflagration in the celebrated University city was so extensive because the citizens would not do anything to extinguish the fire.’ Such misrepresentations are hardly credible. Would the Germans have set fire to Louvain merely to give the civilians the chance of extinguishing the flames? But have we not numerous witnesses to prove that the German hordes started the fires by means of grenades and incendiary bombs? Is it not known that the German soldiers prevented the inhabitants from leaving their houses threatened by the fire, and shot the unfortunates who tried to escape? They deny it, be it



so—the greatest blackguards have denied their crimes. They excuse themselves, but their efforts are vain! Nothing will efface the mark of infamy stamped by the destruction of Louvain.

“The German, trying to justify himself and to blacken his victims, has recourse to the most unscrupulous means. I have here in my hand a German document which is an obvious forgery. Last October, an illustrated English paper published an engraving, representing some Belgian women kneeling, and bending over a wounded soldier lying on a stretcher, his features drawn with suffering; they press his hands, one of them is kissing his brow. In the background are some old people, looking anxiously at the suffering youth. Below the picture were printed these words: ‘Ministering Angels: Belgian women comforting a hero in his last moments.’ The Germans had the same illustration published in their country, but they effaced the English inscription, substituting this: ‘Belgian women behave in a vile and cruel manner towards wounded German soldiers.’ And the credulous readers beyond the Rhine, who saw that picture, were led to believe that the kneeling women were torturing the poor wounded man, and that the old folk were recoiling in horror at their cruelty. The German print has the stamp of forgery. I have here, for you to see them, both the original and the forged pictures. In the latter here and there, the English inscription, imperfectly effaced, affords undeniable proof to the trained eye of fraudulent misrepresentation, classified as a crime by the penal code of all civilized nations.

"In vain do the Germans deny, calumniate and forge: facts are facts, and, moreover, we have their own confessions to confound them.

"The Kaiser's soldiers have to record, day by day, the principal incidents of which they have been witnesses in the course of the campaign. It often happens that the wounded and prisoners have not time to get rid of these notes, and they are found on the bodies of the slain. They form the detailed history of the war, written by the Germans themselves.

"On August 24, 1914, a soldier of the 11th Regiment of Pioneers wrote: 'We have entirely destroyed the village of Longviller. I saw there, before my very eyes, three women hanging on a tree.'

"On the same day, at Ciney, near Namur, an officer recorded the following: 'All night there were abominable crimes, houses plundered, shops sacked, robbery, violation—things that freeze me with horror.'

"On August 29, at Dinant, a soldier wrote: 'After driving men and women out of their dwellings, we killed as many as possible. In certain places there were heaps of corpses three feet high in the streets.'

"On August 26, an officer of the 178th Regiment of the XIIth Saxon Army Corps mentions: 'The hamlet has been destroyed by fire, and the inhabitants burned alive, perhaps quite unjustifiably. It appears that a cyclist's rifle went off accidentally, in consequence of a fall. It was because of this that the hamlet and all its inhabitants were destroyed. Let us hope that similar mistakes will not be re-

peated. At Leppes we killed two hundred civilians, but there an example was necessary.'

"A soldier wrote on August 28: 'To-day, a day of rest. We are profiting by the chance, and plundering everything. It was a real holiday; we played the piano, and pillaged for all we were worth.'

"On the last page of a notebook found on a German lying dead on the field of battle was written: 'We have just destroyed eight houses with the inhabitants. Those who tried to escape, notably two civilians, their wives and a young girl of sixteen, were killed with the bayonet. I pitied the poor little girl who looked at us so supplicatingly with her beautiful, innocent eyes; but it was in vain. There was nothing to be done, our men were no longer men, they were beasts.'

"On September 8, at Rethel, a German officer wrote: 'There is no longer any discipline; everything is condoned; taking alcohol and wine, drinking oneself blind, pillage and robbery—such is the order of the day.'

"At Orchies on the same day, a soldier wrote: 'We arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon, pillaged houses, arrested civilians; a woman trying to escape was shot; after that we set the whole place on fire.'

"On September 9, on the last leaf of a pocket-book belonging to a German officer found dead on the field of battle was written: 'We have received orders to kill every soldier of the enemy, even when he is disarmed, and raises his hands in token of surrender.'

"On August 26, 1914, General Strenger, commanding the 58th Brigade of the XIVth Baden

Corps, issued the following order : ‘From to-day, no more prisoners of war will be taken, every enemy captured will be put to death, even the wounded, with or without arms. We must not leave behind us a single living enemy.’

“You shudder with horror. That I well understand. Dingaan and Mapela have found rivals ; in the history of the civilized world nothing like it in barbarity is to be found. Remember, this cannot be denied ; it is the written and signed confession of German infamy.

“You will tell me perhaps that my language is extravagant, you will repeat to me what one of you has said : ‘I know very many Germans who are not barbarians, but honest people, peaceful and kindly.’ Certainly I myself know some who are perfectly good people ; but we do not attack any individual German, we make war, implacable and merciless, upon German militarism. That is the formidable danger that threatens the liberty of the people, that which William II evoked when he said, in a notorious speech : ‘German genius must aspire to the empire of the world.’

“To form an idea of it, one must have seen Prussian militarism at close quarters. Military authority and officers are set up as idols before which every one bows down. The civilian, the *bourgeois*, is considered a second-rate being, whose liberty is subservient to the sword. Recall the incidents of Zabern, they are of recent date—the townsman obliged to make way on the pavement for the officer ; staring at a soldier regarded as an offence ; civilians arrested for laughing when a non-commissioned officer passed by ; assaults upon

peaceful citizens accused of having failed in respect to the military. These are only details, yet they characterize, even in times of peace, a whole system, and tell us how intolerable, domineering and liberty-threatening is German militarism. What has just happened in Belgium and the North of France is the outcome, the natural fruit, the matured product of this Prussian conception, which is made up of arrogance, brutality and tyranny.

“Did not General von Bissing himself write : ‘What does the destruction of Louvain matter to us ? It is of less importance than the life of a single German soldier.’

“Listen to what the German General von Disfurth said regarding the atrocities in Belgium : ‘To exculpate our soldiers would be unworthy of us ; we owe explanations, and still less excuses, to nobody. What our soldiers have done, and will do, to destroy our enemies, is, and will be, well done ; everything is justified beforehand. What matters the destruction of the finest monument of art ?—it is a matter of indifference to us. The smallest clod of earth that covers the body of one of our soldiers is more venerable than all the cathedrals and works of art in the world. They say we are barbarians ; we are justified in what we do.’

“*Everything is justified* BEFOREHAND ! That is the monstrous theory of German militarism, of which, in its manual for the officers raised from the ranks, the grand staff gives the following official formula : ‘War cannot be directed solely against the soldiers of the enemy : no humanitarian consideration must hinder its being directed unsparingly against civilians and their property.’

"It is therefore systematically, by authority, in accordance with a clearly elaborated method, that German militarism has led the Teuton soldiery into these horrible and savage orgies which degrade civilization below the level of the worst Jacqueries. What is worse, with a cynicism which staggers humanity, the Germans vaunt and glorify their culture, and threaten Europe with it. 'We do not intend,' writes Max Harden in the *Zukunft*, 'to attempt to justify ourselves before the civilized world. Germany refuses to appear before the tribunal of Europe, as she does not recognize that tribunal. Germany scourges Europe, to make it submit to her law.'

"We find in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, over the signature of Professor Lasson, the quintessence of militarism summed up in this formula: 'Germany has no friends in the world, she is feared by every one, and that suffices. We have on our side the consciousness of being better instructed and more moral than all other nations.' The German jack-boot, the crushing of Europe under its infamous heel, terror,—that is what is foretold, what is promised us. 'Militarism,' writes Professor Neisse, in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, 'has made Germany great and strong, and this militarism we will maintain after the war, in order to gather the full fruits of victory.' And Dr. Oswald, a most learned man, sent, if I mistake not, on an official mission, uttered these aphorisms at a recent meeting at Stockholm: 'Thanks to her virtues Germany has arrived at a degree of civilization superior to that of other peoples. And if you ask me what is her ambition I will tell you: "that Germany is determined to rule Europe, to remould it after

the German pattern.” You are also acquainted with that acknowledged formula of German policy : ‘Whoever is not for us is against us ; it is for every one to choose between German culture and German vengeance.’ Paraphrasing this axiom, Professor Lasson wrote quite lately in *De Amsterdammer* : ‘We hold indisputable sway, from the intellectual and moral point of view, over all the peoples of the world. That is why those who are not with us, hate us ; that is why it is necessary to crush once for all those who place obstacles in the way of our supremacy.’

“Do you see the logical inter-connection of facts ? Prussian militarism idolized by the Kaiser, by the Professors, by all the Pomeranians, engendering the principle of the worship of might, as the one origin of right and justice. Might, blind and heartless, knowing only one law—to vanquish, dominate and crush. To attain this end all means are fair, be they barbarous and savage. ‘Everything is justified beforehand.’

“Do you see at this hour how true it is to say that Germany threatens the liberty of the peoples, and that the Allies are fighting for the civilization of the world ? How ignorant and simple are those who are surprised at the attitude of Belgium and her valorous effort to free herself from the grip of the German colossus. Here I have sometimes heard this view expressed, that, after all, the Flemish people would not find themselves so badly off, once they were annexed to the German throne. Pray understand that this language fills us with indignation and shame. Never did the Belgian soul awake more ardent and strong than on the day when Germany laid on her her brutal hand, Walloons and

Flemings, animated by the same patriotic thrill, swore fidelity in life and death. There was not a native of Flanders with his heart in the right place who did not brush away as a stain the idea of submitting to German domination, for the Flemish—the whole history of Flanders proves it—are fanatics in the cause of liberty, they know that in no country in the world is one more free than in Belgium. I need not tell *you* how firmly our people cling to the rights of their language, you, who did not consent to lay down your arms until the day when there was included in Article 5 of the Treaty of Vereeniging the liberty of *Taal* in the public schools, in the courts and tribunals of the Transvaal and of the Orange Free State. We Flemings also, in our free Belgium, have the love of our mother tongue ardently, passionately, at heart.

O Landeken, o zyt maar klein  
 Niet meender zie 'k u geren  
 En 'k zie u, zulk en is er geen  
 En 'k zie u toch zoo geren.

Myn Vlaanderen spreekt een eigen taal  
 God gaf elk land de zyne,  
 En laat ze zyk zyn laat ze kaal  
 Z 'is Vlaamsch en z 'is de myne.  
 Z 'is Vlaamsch en die zyn Vlaamsch veracht  
 De taal van dien verdwyne,  
 Verdwyn 'hem, met all sprekens kracht !  
 Z 'is Vlaamsch en z 'is de myne !

O Landeke, ja zyt maar klein  
 Niet grooter zou 'k u fieren,  
 En'k zie u en 't en is maar een  
 En'k zie u toch zoo geren !<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These verses are untranslatable ; we give a practically literal rendering of them—



“The enthusiastic acclamations with which you greet the thrilling words of Guido Gezelle, the immortal poet of Flanders, tell me how your hearts throb with a like love for the rights of language—one of the most sacred rights of a people, because language is at once the revered heritage of one’s ancestors, the predestined sign of the pride of a race and the safeguard of individual dignity. As long as a people keeps intact the rights and liberty of its language, it affirms its personality, it maintains its nobility of race; in spite of the winds and tempests of a world’s politics, it remains a distinct individuality! That the Germans, in the folly of their *Deutschland über Alles*, have never desired or tolerated.

“Ask the millions of Poles of the province of Posen what, under the Prussian rule, has become of their old and beautiful mother tongue. They will tell you that a merciless persecution tends to exterminate the last traces of the national language; that even the priests who teach the Word of God in Polish, because if they did not the people would not understand it, are pitilessly thrown into prison;

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Little country, be small; I would not have you larger. I love you; your like does not exist. I love you so much all the same.

My Flanders speaks her own language; God gives to each country its own. And whether it be rich or poor, it is Flemish and my own tongue!

It is Flemish, and if a native of Flanders despises it, may his tongue wither away and he himself depart, deprived of the gift of speech. It is Flemish, and it is mine.

Little country be small; I will not have you larger. I love you, for there is no other land your equal. I love you so much all the same!

they will tell you of the proscriptions, the confiscations, and executions of all those who dare to claim the rights and liberties of their native language.

"Ask Schleswig what has become of the old language of their ancestors, dear to every Danish heart, under the Prussian domination. They will tell you that a barbarous and cruel repression, the rule of sheer brutality and of the sword, wages merciless war upon the language of the people.

"What shall be said of Alsace-Lorraine? One day, thirty years ago, I greeted a Lorraine friend in the street with a hearty '*Bon jour, cher ami!*' The poor man stared at me in a frightened manner, cast a rapid glance around, and seeing nothing suspicious seized both my hands, saying, 'Do you not know that it is a serious thing for *us* to talk French? But all the same, how it warms one's heart to hear it!' That simple incident has remained in my memory as a tragic revelation; from that day I have abhorred the German *régime*. Oh! what those poor Frenchmen have had to suffer! They shut themselves up of an evening, with doors barred and bolted, at the back of their houses, the shutters well closed, to speak their own language among themselves; to read together some newspaper from France which a patriot has smuggled through at the risk of his liberty. Have not old men and women of Alsace-Lorraine been shot for the sole crime of speaking French?

"I know well enough that Germany wishes to make advances and promises to the Flemish people of Belgium. Her game is plain; she wishes to create division between the Walloon and the Flemish parts of the country. Vain are her efforts!

The soldiers in the trenches have sealed with their blood the indissoluble union of Walloons and Flemish. As for the promises of Germany, one knows what they are worth ; the Flemish are not so simple-minded as to let themselves be taken in. The German has ignored his signature ; he has repudiated his promise ; in the eyes of the world he is no better than a bankrupt in honour.

“Moreover, a quiet good sense is the master virtue of the Flemish ; it is wronging them to believe that they would barter their liberty, independence and happiness for slavery and racial annihilation under Prussian militarism. The Flemish, pacific subjects of a sympathetic, brotherly and high-minded sovereign, would go mad under the despotic yoke of Kaiserism. And is there not henceforth the wall of barbarism to separate Flemish from German ? We have been tortured, crucified in the flesh of our flesh, the blood of our blood, and for generations there will arise from believing souls in Flanders this prayer : ‘From the rage of the Germans, Good Lord, deliver us !’ The soul of Belgium, purified by misfortune, rises from one end of the country to the other, greater, stronger, more firmly resolved to struggle to the end for independence and liberty.

“Certainly the tortures endured are atrocious. At this moment six millions of Belgians who remained in their country endure misery and famine, untamed by the German jack-boot. The civilized world rouses itself to stretch out a hand to comfort and sustain them. Since the day we landed in Africa we have had the most cordial receptions and evidences of generosity, for which I feel incapable

of expressing adequately the thanks of my country. Here, in this noble capital, people vie with one another in aid of the suffering Belgians who stayed at home. Thanks for what you have done ; thanks for what you mean still to do ; may God bless and reward you !

“ Comforted by the world’s sympathy, suffering Belgium will await stoically the hour of justice, the holy hour, when, their land set free by the powerful Allies, the heroes of Liège and of the Yser shall bring back to Brussels their beloved Sovereign, King Albert, the living symbol of right and honour.”

## CHAPTER XIV

No sooner had we alighted from the train at Johannesburg than we were welcomed by the Mayor and members of the Town Council. A crowd, kept back by lines of police, cheered us heartily. Officials in green and silver livery conducted us to official motor-cars—luxurious limousines—which bore us to one of the first hotels of the town, where rooms had been engaged for us. In the wide and busy streets hawkers were selling our portraits, and apparently doing good business. The photographs, taken at Capetown, bear the words “Brave Belgium’s Missioners.”

Immediately—that is to say, as soon as we had recovered from a stifling night in the train—before taking up our other duties we paid a visit to the Governor-General. Every one knows the high position occupied by the King’s representatives in the British Colonies, where they exercise a sort of vice-royalty. Lord Buxton is not unknown in Belgium; he was Minister of Commerce of the United Kingdom at the International Exhibition at Ghent; and it was he who contributed personally to the important share taken by England at the *World’s Fair* in Flanders.

The Governor-General, with two orderlies in attendance, received us cordially. I thanked him

in the name of the Belgian Government for all the attentions with which our Mission had been overwhelmed ever since our arrival in Africa, and I expressed our gratitude for the honour His Excellency was doing us in presiding at the great meeting at Johannesburg. Lord Buxton, with the distinction and simplicity that reveal instantly the man of high lineage, told us how sincere an affection and admiration he had felt for the Belgian people ever since his visit to Ghent. He spoke for a long time about the events and misfortunes of our country. Then, dealing with the Mission, the Governor-General congratulated us warmly on the success that had rewarded our efforts. We were invited to lunch, and Lady Buxton, with an amiable cordiality that doubles the charm of hospitality, graciously did the honours as hostess. After the repast coffee was served under the galleries, with their fine flower-decked colonnades, whence a view extends over the loveliest landscape imaginable towards the distant blue mountains—an ideal picture. At our feet stretched the Park of the Residency, modelled on the famous gardens of Este, with floral stairs, successive terraces where cypresses shoot up : a garden of delight with mysterious shades of camellias, palms, bamboos, glades overflowing with sunshine and flowers, a place of delight such as may be seen in some parts of the world—at Tivoli, Seville, Grenada, Miramar, and Cintra,—endowed with a strange fascination which stirs the inmost fibres of the soul by disclosing visions of Paradise.

Walking through the gardens, I paused a minute to look at a rose of a brilliant carnation colour, clinging to the trunk of a cypress, as though seeking

support and maintenance. It seemed to me the image of my dear little Belgium, wreathing herself on the trunk of the Allies. I banished from my mind as an evil—a German—dream that melancholy thought of the poet—

“Voir mourir une rose au flanc d’un cyprès noir.”

The Mayor of Johannesburg was announced. “I have come,” said he, “respectfully to claim my guests: they belong to me, Your Excellency, and I do not mean to give them up to any one.”

We motored towards the summit of a hillside from which one has a fine bird’s-eye view of Johannesburg and its environs. When gazing over this vast and brilliant metropolis, it is difficult to realize that twenty-five years ago there was nothing here but bare rocks, desolation and solitude. A magnificent city now extends over a surface of eighty square miles, with wide avenues—crowded with electric trams and vehicles of every kind—huge buildings, sumptuous palaces, verdant suburbs—the abode of nearly four hundred thousand people. On the horizon are clouds of smoke, rising above the grey, heaped-up debris of industrial works. These are the gold-mines of the Rand. The golden fairy by the touch of her metal wand has caused to rise from the hard and naked rock this grand metropolis, which vies with the gayest and most brilliant of modern cities.

“See the number of churches,” said the Mayor; “there are few towns in the world that count so many, and all are well attended, which proves,” he added slyly, “that the demon of gold does not compete with the good God.” His words

reminded me that, a few years ago, at Toronto—the great Canadian city which also rose, as if by magic, from the heart of rich and laborious Ontario—a member of the Ottawa Parliament said to me: “Toronto boasts a larger number of churches than any other town in the world”: a powerful and quite modern proof of that irrestrainable aspiration of the human soul to raise itself by the worship of Divinity above the material conditions of life.

In the town we went through Rissik and Eloff Streets, with houses of seven or eight storeys, crowded pavements, and huge plate-glass windows, containing the most luxurious displays of goods. We might easily have imagined ourselves in some great European town. We visited a monster store and found everything there, from cradles, *layettes* and sugar-plums, to coffins, memorial slabs and funeral wreaths. The tourist instinct dormant within me felt somewhat annoyed at having made a journey of seven thousand miles to find myself once again in Oxford Street.

At five o'clock a reception took place at the Stock Exchange, where were assembled all the financiers, business men and important merchants. The President of the Stock Exchange addressed us in a speech which I regret I cannot reproduce, but the sense of which will be found paraphrased in a reply which I made somewhat as follows :

“Gentlemen,—In my colleague’s name as well as my own, I thank you for this reception, a surprise which touches us deeply. This active and prosperous



metropolis, the heart of the economic activity of this region, affords us, by your presence here, one of the most powerful consolations that Belgium could receive. My words cannot adequately express how happy it makes me to hear your enthusiastic applause in support of the speech of your honoured and distinguished President. Yes, we were the most prosperous nation on the continent of Europe ; our trade and industry placed us in the very front rank, and nowhere, relatively, had public wealth and popular thrift been so wonderfully successful. What our misfortunes are, you know. Never has a cultured nation, situated in the centre of Europe, been subjected to like outrages, suffered such a martyrdom, seen itself in a few days reduced to ruin so complete. To believe the Belgian soul capable of discouragement or despair would be to misinterpret it. Our heroes of Liège and the Yser show you plainly enough the quality of our soldiers ; our engineers, our workmen and merchants, in raising up our ruins and restoring our commerce and industries, will display the same tenacity, the same stout-heartedness.

“ But all this would be useless unless the civilized world on the morrow of victory continued to give us, along with its keen sympathy, the support which is indispensable to our regeneration. We shall need credit and business connections. Credit ! Could any one refuse that to Belgium, who has shown to the world that she was willing to sacrifice everything—children, fortune, her very existence—in order to remain faithful to her signed engagements and to her honour ? Business connections ; how necessary these will be ! It has just been truly said that the rôle of Belgium may in the future

be one of considerable importance in the world's markets. The conditions of work in England and France, dear living, large salaries, free spending, limitation of production, make manufacturing costs in these countries high, and prevent cheap production. Germany had a fine opportunity of flooding the world with cheap articles, which are in unlimited demand throughout the colonies. Gentlemen, I have faith in the wisdom of my country, and the maintenance of its tradition of hard work. Sustained by the world's sympathies, it will be able to make the necessary effort, to fill the important place in the markets that the future holds in reserve for her. Belgium faced the German colossus squarely when it came to annihilate her, and will without hesitation be able to oppose it in the peaceful field of commercial rivalry. Certainly we are not so stupid as to wish to overcome Germany there, any more than it was possible for us, unaided, to conquer her on the field of battle. But the new Belgium will want to have a place in the sun, and to enlarge it. In economics, as on the field of honour, our powerful Allies will assist us, in common interests, by setting up, if need be, the necessary barriers. In different parts of your vast colony I have visited the great markets from which your farmers and colonists get their supplies. I have been shown the articles supplied by Germany, and some one said to me: 'Try and make that in Belgium, and never again will the German product be sold here.' I am convinced that there are few of those products that Belgium could not supply on the same terms. But here, too, credit will be indispensable, as will also the creation of financial organizations designed to

facilitate confidence in commercial relations and security of payment.

“Even now business transactions between Belgium and the South African Union represent an annual value of £1,600,000 sterling. We are ahead of France, but Germany comes in first with business running up to four millions a year. What was the case yesterday must not hold good to-morrow! I desire no other proof than the manifestation of sympathy—important and highly significant—which you now give us. To be sure, business has nothing to do with questions of sentiment, but the declarations of common interests and economic solidarity against Germany, formulated by your President, and so cordially endorsed by all of you, are to me both a revelation and a consolation. On returning to my country I shall tell my fellow-citizens and our great King—who in spite of the cares of war does not cease to think of the regeneration of his country—what I have seen here, what I have heard, your promises of solidarity with us. As for Belgium, I assure you that, after having astonished the world by her valour, she will astonish it a second time by the will-power and indomitable energy displayed in her economic and commercial resurrection.”

My words, which were loudly applauded, formed the topic of some most interesting conversations with several leading business men.

Next day another reception was organized, this time by the Chamber of Commerce. There again the same idea was expressed, the same desire to see Belgium, under advantageous conditions, Ger-

many's competitor in the manufacture of cheap goods, of which the colonists are the best purchasers.

These manifestations have an importance which I recommend to the attention of my compatriots, leaving it to be reflected on by those who, in different ways, will bear the responsibility of Belgium's economic restoration.

The reception of the Belgian Mission by the business world at Johannesburg was warmly commented upon, and news of it cabled to London in these words: "The delegates of the Belgian Government have arrived at Johannesburg, as guests of the municipality: they have been welcomed by the Mayor and the various notabilities. The Stock Exchange gave the delegates a most enthusiastic reception. The President, Mr. Greig, greeted them as allies with whom they would henceforth be indissolubly united in a prosperous future. Colonel Bettington complimented the delegates in French, and M. Standaert, the leader of the Belgian Mission, made a fitting reply."

The Manager of the Standard Bank very kindly allowed us to see the improved arrangements of that establishment. We paid an interesting visit to the vaults, where, well protected from thieves and fire, are the deposits of the gold-mines. Here we saw large ingots like elongated bricks, with a greenish-yellow sheen, each brick—and there were some ten thousand of them—worth a hundred thousand francs. It took us twelve minutes to walk round £40,000,000!

"A Wonderful Demonstration." "Johannesburg's Memorable Gathering." Such were the titles which appeared in type in the papers of

the African metropolis the day after our meeting at Johannesburg.

After many weeks I sometimes shut my eyes, and again picture to myself that immense mass of human beings: I hear once more those overpowering cheers, that wild enthusiasm. Oh! dear little Belgian soldier, what would I not do to bring before your eyes in the trenches this grand and affecting scene. You would feel your heart thrill with joy and pride, for it was you they acclaimed in magnificent outbursts which should make you, as long as you live, proud of yourself and of the name of Belgium, which you have made another name for glory!

An impartial spectator is in a position to appreciate better than ourselves the character of this manifestation. I therefore confine myself to translating here the report of one of the principal local journals—

“If Johannesburg had possessed a sufficiently large hall, from five to six thousand persons might have had the pleasure of listening last night to the Belgian delegates. The magnificent room at our new Town Hall, with its two thousand five hundred seats, was full three-quarters of an hour before the opening of the meeting; and the less fortunate crowded into the galleries, passages and wherever it was possible to find standing room. When the doors were shut, four thousand persons were packed in the hall and the vestibules adjoining. In the street a crowd of from two to three thousand thronged all the entrances, only to find that they had come too late! It was, indeed, a pity that

all could not hear the profoundly stirring speeches of M. Standaert and Dr. Van der Perre ; they were human documents, corroborating numerous witnesses and reports, which, spread by the Press, have astounded the public for some weeks past. These men galvanized emotions hardly stirred by material documents ; they fired our sympathies on behalf of their tortured little nation ; they made us all understand how indispensable it is in the name of civilization to conquer Germany.

“The vast hall, before the opening of the meeting, presented an interesting sight. The immense audience waited patiently. Everyone said that the new room of their Town Hall could not be opened under more stirring and memorable circumstances. Civic pride was surprised and flattered by the fine appearance of the hall ; in fact, there was a great deal to admire, its vast proportions and noble architecture being set off by dazzling lights. But the sense of pride roused by the sight of this incomparable municipal home seemed to render more vivid the feelings of horror against those who destroyed the cathedrals and the finest monuments of art in Belgium, those superb relics of the past, which, as M. Standaert has said, ‘though respected by the barbarians of old times, were destroyed by the barbarians of the twentieth century.’

“Lively and demonstrative, the audience gave an ovation to the Consul-General of France, M. Dejoux, who was one of the first to arrive on the scene. Directly H. E. the Governor-General appeared, accompanied by the Belgian delegates, the hall burst into a storm of cheers. M. Standaert took his place on the right and Dr. Van der Perre

on the left of Lord Buxton. Lady Buxton, the Administrator of the province, the Mayor of Johannesburg, the senators and representatives of the district were also present. The Governor-General's speech was vehemently applauded, especially the passages in which he said: 'We are proud of Belgium,' and 'The heroic and pathetic figure of King Albert is without an equal in the whole world.' M. Standaert spoke first. His tall, slight form seemed for a moment to bend beneath the tempest of endless cheers that greeted him. The speaker had no need to excuse his lack of fluency in the English language, he was perfectly understood by all, but everyone appreciated his humorous way of excusing himself: 'Speaking English is for me a sort of adventure in which only your indulgence can preserve me.' In his speech there were scarcely any passages marked by passion or anger, the dominant note being sadness and grief, though he did not show despair for a single moment. He gave a striking description 'of the most terrible picture that human eyes could behold,' and after a heart-rending description of the work wrought by murderers, incendiaries and thieves in Belgium, he exclaimed: 'Not content with that, the Germans after robbing us of everything else would even like to rob us of our honour.' Then having rebutted German lies in well-reasoned words, the speaker in moving terms thanked the people of Johannesburg, whose inexhaustible generosity towards the Belgians is a most beautiful instance of charity and fellowship. 'I know what you still intend to do,' he said. 'Thanks, a thousand thanks, in the name of the six million Belgians who live unsubdued beneath

the barbarian yoke, and send you from beyond the seas, from the smoking ruins of their formerly magnificent cities, the smiles of undying gratitude.' Frantic cheering greeted the conclusion of M. Standaert's speech in English.

"It was a thousand pities that a large portion of the public was unable to follow the speaker in his short speech in Flemish. No notes this time; it was an unimpeded wave of eloquence. We saw in an instant that we had here a leader of the Belgian Bar. We have no hesitation in saying, that never in this city had we listened to so splendid a speech delivered in Dutch.

"'O my Flanders!' he exclaimed in tones that thrilled the audience, and sounded like the knell of some wounded soul, 'O my country, so rich and so beautiful! The monuments that were your pride are lying in ashes. Treasures of art, magnificent cathedrals, time-honoured belfries, where are you now? The barbarian has descended upon you, more barbarous than the barbarians of any age.'

"Amidst indescribable emotion and prolonged cheering the orator sat down.

"Dr. Van der Perre, deputy for Antwerp, was applauded as warmly as his colleague, and although only part of the audience could follow him, his passion and his voice, vibrating with profound conviction, found an echo in every heart. The greater part of his speech was a brilliant and well-sustained peroration, in which he made an appeal to those who do not believe in the atrocities committed by the Germans. 'Come with me, and see the trees where priests are hanging on the branches. Let us together open the tombs, and there see the charred



remains of those who were burned alive. Follow me to Aerschot, now all in ruins, where women were shut up in the church whilst their husbands and their sons were being shot against the walls of the sacred building. Accompany me to Louvain, ravaged by incendiary torches, where men and women were shot down like game. Let me show you that mother, driven from her fireside with her eight children, who, on asking what she should do with her numerous family, received for answer: 'We will take care of your brats,'—and they killed five before her very eyes. Come with me to London, and you will find there a mother, holding in her arms her year-old infant whose nose and finger-tips the German soldiers burned off.'

"When His Excellency read the resolution, proposed by the Administrator of the Transvaal and seconded by the Mayor, and put it to the vote, it was a thrilling sight; in that immense hall there was only one mind, one heart.

"The resolution was worded: 'The assembled citizens of Johannesburg express their deep sympathy with the Belgian people, unjustly attacked by Germany, and their horror at the atrocities committed by the German armies in Belgium. They express their intense admiration of the brave Belgian army, which with the courage of heroes valiantly resisted the attacks of a terrible enemy.

"They undertake to contribute, as far as in them lies, towards the relief of the great sufferings endured as a result of this terrible war, and to assist Belgium's struggle for independence, right on to the day of entire reparation for all the evil inflicted on this noble little nation.

“‘The Mayor of Johannesburg is requested to cable this solemn resolution to H. M. the King and to the Prime Minister of Belgium.’

“After a show of hands in approval—the greater part of the audience raising both hands—there was indescribable excitement when the audience called for the *Brabançonne*, and the memorable meeting ended with ‘God save the King’!”

On account of both the striking personality of the speaker, and the noble ideas so eloquently expressed, I give here, with a sense of deep gratitude, the speech made by H.E. the Governor-General, Lord Buxton, at the Johannesburg meeting.

“Delegates of Belgium, Ladies and Gentlemen :

“We are assembled this evening to listen to two distinguished Members of the Belgian Parliament, who have undertaken a voyage of six thousand miles for the purpose of instructing authoritatively the people of the Union upon the action of Germany in regard to Belgium. Before they speak I desire to say a few words.

“Personal sympathy attracts me to Belgium. I know the country intimately and a number of its leading men ; several of them, of illustrious names, are my friends, notably M. Cooreman, late President of the Chamber, M. Max, the valiant Burgomaster of Brussels, and M. Davignon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Last year, as Minister of Commerce for Great Britain, I went to Ghent, in my capacity as member of the Government, to visit the Exhibition. The Foreign Office had entrusted me with a mission of great good-

will and friendship to Belgium, with regard to which I made a public statement. This mission had in view—and, I believe, realized—the development and consolidation of friendship between the two countries. Our distinguished visitors are about to bring before your eyes some horrible pictures. It is the story of a premeditated and cynical violation of the sanctity of treaties which Germany, by solemn pledges, had obliged herself to respect;—treaties which are the sovereign protection of the liberty and independence of the small European nations. It is the story of a shameless disregard of most of the laws of warfare between civilized nations, laws recognized and assented to by Germany, but transgressed without the slightest scruple ever since the first day of the war. It is the history of deliberate destruction, by sword and fire, of monuments and historic belfries of inestimable value; of pillage and incendiarism, wickedly wreaked on houses and property; of mutilations, outrages against non-combatant and harmless citizens; of brutalities to women and children.

“I confess to you that I took a long time to convince myself of the truth of the accusations brought against the German armies. That well-disciplined troops in the twentieth century could commit such atrocities seemed impossible. How was it conceivable that they could be the work of a great nation which professed to lead civilization and Christianity?

“Alas! these facts are true, the evidence is overwhelming: Belgium is the victim of Prussian mentality, methods and ideals. These crimes have been aggravated by the hypocrisies and blasphemies

of those who, while committing them, call themselves the chosen people of God. These acts are not the acts of God, they are the work of the devil!

“What can be the explanation of these cruelties and foul deeds? In my opinion it must be found in the spirit of malice and vengeance; vengeance above all, because the little Belgian nation threw herself into the breach, and thwarted the worldly ambition of the great German Empire. This destruction, these crimes, these atrocities we detest, condemn and hate, as an infamous stain upon our much-vaunted civilization.

“But does it not seem to you, that through the dark clouds piled high up on the horizon there shows, as it were, a clear streak of blue? Over there in Belgium there appear before us, shining brilliantly, the highest and most noble form of patriotism, the loveliest qualities of courage, self-denial and self-respect. One thing has impressed me deeply—that the Belgians have borne all these terrible sufferings without murmuring or complaint. They have not looked behind them, they have not for an instant regretted what they have done, they have not uttered a single reproach against the Allies. They feel that whatever might be the course of events, they have chosen the right road.

“The Prime Minister of Belgium said the other day, most rightly and sensibly, that he was proud of what Belgium had done. We also are proud of Belgium. With us henceforth admiration and gratitude are indissolubly linked together. Certainly, it is difficult to express our feelings in speech, but

history will inscribe in its annals the conduct of the Belgian people and render it immortal.

"The heroic and pathetic figure of King Albert stands out with great brilliancy ; he is the worthy sovereign of a nation of heroes.

"As for us, what is our duty? We have to comfort those who suffer, and to help the unfortunate. I am glad to know that Johannesburg and the Rand have decided to prove their sympathy by their generosity. But as a nation, as an Empire, it is our duty to do more. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has publicly promised, in full agreement with the United Kingdom and the Empire, not to sheathe the sword until the evil done to Belgium has been repaired, as far as it is possible to make full and abundant restitution for all the harm that has been done.

"I am convinced that South Africa is ready to enter heart and soul into this cause. She will not remain behind the other countries of the Empire, for she, too, burns to avenge and restore Belgium, and take her share in the restoration of peace, a lasting world-wide peace. This end can be achieved in one way only, by destroying for ever the dreadful influence of German militarism, that universal scourge whose motto is : ' Might is Right,' and whose war cry : ' Woe to the vanquished.'"

## CHAPTER XV

WE had accepted a pressing invitation from the Town Council of Pietersburg, a town in the north of the Transvaal, under the tropic of Capricorn. This single meeting required a two-days railway journey.

Finding some one to consult, in the person of an agreeable and clever Belgian, Dr. Heymanns, formerly the medical attendant and confidant of President Kruger, my colleague had been ordered, in spite of strong protests, to take a few days' rest. I had therefore to undertake the tropical journey alone, in a saloon carriage transformed into a rolling furnace, in company with the ever-talkative cook, and Cocoa, who never failed to distinguish himself.

About eleven o'clock at night, when I wished to go to my little bedroom, I found it brilliantly lit up, with all the windows open, and invaded by myriads of moths attracted thither by the dazzling light. It took a couple of hours to get rid of the intruders, partly by stratagem, partly by chasing and killing them. Afterwards there was a thorough cleaning up. Cocoa, who had laughed heartily on seeing this carriageful of lepidoptera, was finally worn out by the increase of work that his folly had brought upon him. I am not sure if he benefited

by the lesson, nor if he understood the cause of this nocturnal invasion.

A hundred and twenty miles beyond Pretoria the influence of the tropics showed itself in striking manner ; there was something of the despair of Vatel in the cook's consternation when he informed me that his refrigerator was out of order !

A hearty reception awaited me on the platform of the Pietersburg railway station : the kindly inhabitants of the charming capital of the district of Zoutpansberg could not thank me sufficiently for having come so far expressly to oblige them. This was doubtless the first time the Belgian flag had been hoisted under the tropic of Capricorn and the strains of the *Brabançonne* heard.

After luncheon and the usual toasts the Town Council proposed my paying a visit to the Kaffirs, who, moreover, were expecting us. The carriage, drawn by twelve frisky mules, moved off in a cloud of dust and a tinkle of bells. All the people in the town were on their doorsteps, and greeted us with friendly gestures ; the magistrate, on horseback, cantered by my side.

What a rich and fertile country is this, where nothing is wanting—except, alas ! labour. Everything grows here : cereals, coffee, sugar-cane, fragrant tobacco and cotton. This last is deserving of special remark, for the cotton plant of the Transvaal gives a product of a quality far superior to that of America. In this tropical forest, with its magnificent vegetation, grows the baobab, the king of the forest, fantastically shaped, low, but wide-spreading, with dense foliage. “There are only wild pigs, monkeys and leopards here,” my neighbour told me ; “but

a little further on, about thirty miles away, between the Zoutpansberg and the banks of the Limpopo, antelopes and lions abound."

The jingling mules, going at a good pace, climbed a hill, and suddenly there came on our view the strange scene of a high plain scattered over with enormous well-plumped melons, with their projecting ribs. It was a Kaffir village.

Savages have never understood why civilized people live in rectangular houses, the corners merely giving an excuse for inelegant and dusty detail, and the angles contributing nothing to the builder's art but breaks in continuity, causing a thousand difficulties.

On arriving we found a great gathering in front of the Chief's kraal, a mass of multi-coloured plaids, whose vivid tints do honour to Belgian manufacture; but this lavish clothing seems to be quite exceptional here. The materials were spotless, the creases still showing, and some of the wearers were so clumsy at fastening and arranging them, that it was only natural to wonder how many times in their lives they had dressed themselves up. The eyes of all these big children glowed brightly with curiosity and artless admiration of the Belgian whose visit would be a red-letter day in their lives.

On getting out of the carriage I paused, dazed by the enchantment of the picture. The blacks, a motley crowd and quaint in their stiff clothing; wonderfully ugly old men and women leaning on tall staves like prelates' crosiers, who seemed to rouse themselves from a long stupor; a crowd of brats lively and vigorous, like bronze Cupids; the harmonious domes of the huts showing their



graceful curves beneath a fiery sky, an atmosphere whose molecules vibrated in a golden mist, giving to the limbs and faces of the negroes and the flesh of the plump children, metallic, rainbow-tinted reflections.

The Chief did the honours of his kraal, which belongs to him alone, a miniature village, encircled by a wall over six feet high, intended specially to keep out wild beasts. In the vast enclosure were a number of dwellings—I was going to say melons—corresponding to the number of wives the Chief possesses. Further back are huts reserved for old relations and for domesticity; still further off are the outhouses and stables. The interior of these dwellings was astonishingly clean; the hardened soil was covered with a layer of colour-wash of irreproachable whiteness. There was hardly any furniture,—just a few mats on the floor for sleeping upon, here and there some pitchers of glazed earthenware, pleasant to the eye, fashioned by the Kaffir women, who are skilful workers in the art of pottery.

The dwelling of the Chief was larger: he alone possesses a bed, which stands in the centre, also some chairs and a large chest.

At the Chief's invitation, his favourite wife, a young and rather fat negress, took off her bracelets and made me a present of them. This slight contact with the black woman gave me a strange, cold feeling in the back, like the sticky, clammy sensation one has on touching unexpectedly a plump, oily slug. I retired with some charming presents, the only exotic items brought back with me in my luggage.

How it was possible in a town counting five thousand inhabitants, of whom scarcely fourteen hundred were of European race, to assemble at the meeting nearly six hundred whites can be explained only by the strict unanimity of all the able-bodied and the adult in responding to the summons. How beautiful was the enthusiasm, how touching the expressions of sympathy and generosity, which were a great compensation for the fatigue undergone on account of this meeting in the tropics.

After a night journey, about nine o'clock in the morning I rejoined my colleague, who told me that a motor-car was waiting to convey us to Rustenburg, where a meeting was to take place. It was impossible to go by train, because, owing to an accident on the line, the traffic had been interrupted. We had not any too much time for covering the seventy-five miles on a road said to be broken and in bad order. They had telephoned the day before to different places on the route, and it appeared that the journey, though difficult, was feasible.

We set off. The hills that surround Pretoria, washed by a thunderstorm, had clothed themselves with brilliant verdure of the most variegated tints. The sun, breaking through the clouds, was quite scorching, and lapped up the moisture like a fish. About twelve miles from the town there was an alarm! A sturdy, bearded Boer, posted in the middle of the road, raised two arms and ordered us to stop: *U zyt de Belgische afgezanten?* ("You are the Belgian delegates?") When we replied that we were: "Well," said he, "see here; the telephone told us of your coming, and my old mother

had an idea that she would make you some waffles, good Flemish waffles, in the machine brought long ago from Holland by our ancestors. You will not refuse them, will you?" And he handed us a basket in which was displayed the crisp and golden pastry reminiscent of the land of Flanders. We wished to get out and thank the old mother, but the inexorable chauffeur said "No!" So we had to confine ourselves to pressing cordially the hands of the Boer who was moved by our simple delight. Our delight?—yes; life, for those who know how to live it, is so made that it sometimes finds the most profound of emotions in insignificant incidents, mere nothings. I pity with all my heart those who never knew the tenderness that treasures as a relic a withered flower dropped by a beloved hand.

At noon, after accomplishing a third of the journey, we breakfasted under a thicket of mimosas at the edge of a stream, and the waffles afforded a dessert as delicious as it was unexpected. The chauffeur, with an air of consternation, came to rouse us out of the state of torpor into which the pitiless sun was plunging us, saying: "It has rained so much that it is not at all certain whether we shall be able to cross the river." We jumped up to investigate. The road was cut by a large sheet of shining water that flowed in a torrent, but the Boers of the neighbourhood, after consulting together, decided that we could pass. Thirty-six oxen advanced with a high-wheeled vehicle, on which we and our luggage were hoisted. Eighteen oxen were harnessed to the motor-car, and eighteen others to our wagon. On we go! The car sank in the mud

up to the frame, the oxen plunged along almost up to the neck ; our wagon, half floating, half rolling, followed the car, proceeding in the very ruts it made. If it got through, we should too ; if it broke down we should stop. Ah ! Those thirty-six red oxen harnessed to the car of the Belgian Mission in Africa ; that car, which on the bosom of a choppy flood was no better than a raft towed by seventy-two horns. What a picture it was to inspire the palette of a painter, the touch of a satirist !

We passed over amid the cheers of the Boers posted on the other bank, delighted with the success of their efforts. After the necessary delay in putting the car right, we set off again at full speed. Ah ! another river ! The chauffeur made a dash for it, and plunging into the water, reached the further bank in triumph, amid our applause. We scorched along at top speed. The countryside was deliciously fresh, and bathed in so pure a light that the blue-tipped mountains on the horizon glittered like crystals, all white and azure.

Bad luck ! the road was again cut by a stream of unknown depth and more than a hundred and fifty yards wide. The chauffeur hesitated ; then in a twinkling he was undressed, and jumping in to sound the depth, he returned, saying : *Alles is wel* ("All is well"). After retreating some yards to get up better speed, the motor-car hurled itself into the water like a seal, and bounded over the stones. Water flew on all sides. Half, two-thirds of the distance is cleared, when suddenly we come to a dead stop ; silent and helpless the machine remains stuck fast !

The chauffeur, in water up to his waist, went

off to search for help. Prisoners of the river, with that philosophic calm which is the best of tactics with which to oppose the elements, we took tea in the form of mineral water, and comforted ourselves with some of the good Flemish waffles. The chauffeur returned, having found four asses, which he harnessed to the car. Alas! we did not budge any more than a milestone would have done. Perseveringly Aliboron pulled and tugged in a supreme effort. Suddenly harness, pole and girths creak, crack, — break. Luckily a Boer has seen us from a distance; he arrives with six stout oxen, and these slowly, solemnly, disdainfully, bring us to the bank. On this occasion setting the car to rights is a rather long business; it is six o'clock in the evening and we still have twenty-two miles before us, but if no further accident arises we shall reach our destination up to time. The sun is setting; we pass through a richly planted country, where each tree is a picture; oranges abound. The clearness of the air beautifies everything, giving a bright enamel-like sheen to the lovely fruit and making one dream of the Garden of the Hesperides before Hercules had stolen the golden apples.

Less poetic was the question whether the journey from Pretoria to Rustenburg the day after a rain-storm would not be a herculean task; for here is an entire Boer family posted on the road, signing to us to stop. Ah! the good souls! They offered us coffee, biscuits, bouquets, cigars, but above all they showed their anxiety, and would have liked to persuade us to stay with them, but did not dare. They had telephonic communication with Rustenburg, and already our passage was known of. News

came that a considerable crowd was waiting, and that farmers had come in from all directions for the meeting. We begged them to telephone the likelihood of delay, and also our firm determination to arrive. Immediately we began to devour space, we had only fifteen, fourteen, thirteen miles to travel. Unfortunately the evening was closing in, the lamp of night rose, full-faced, reminding me of that question asked by a facetious Boer : *Hoe vind U de maan in Zuid Afrika?* ("How do you find the moon in South Africa?") Suddenly we beheld the laughing face of Diana at our feet, blissfully reflected in the immense mirror of a new, unexpected river of record width. "This is the last," said the chauffeur, "but all the same I did not suspect it would be so wide." What were we to do? In the dark there could be no question of oxen; we were scarcely eleven miles from the end of our journey, it was past seven o'clock; we ought to have arrived by now. Was it possible to cross the river? It was for us to decide, and my colleague and I, by common consent, agreed that we must make every effort to arrive at our destination. Recklessness rather than wisdom inspired this decision.

In a fever of anxiety, on we went. The water flung itself about in phosphorescent jets. The engine kept going, we scarcely breathed in our excitement. The car performed wonders, it seemed a hydro-plane, but right in the middle of the river it stopped lamentably, paralysed, exhausted, struck to the heart. The chauffeur gave a great sigh of despair; poor fellow, he had lost the game. Our chagrin and vexation may be imagined, as we thought of the im-

portant gathering, and people expecting us in a strong centre of German propaganda. The chauffeur, who had again gone off in search of help, returned with two negroes, who carried us on their shoulders out of the water. It was high time, for the water had reached the footboard of the car. At the hour when, greeted by the cheers of five hundred listeners, the Belgian Mission was to appear on the platform of the Town Hall at Rustenburg, we were seated gloomily on the bank of a nameless river, biting our lips under the bantering gaze of the moon. A vague hope remained, of setting off again in the motor-car, and arriving late. We explained to the blacks that if they rescued the machine they would not have done a bad day's work. Like children, they went back into the water, plunging and frisking about with the funniest capers. In about ten minutes' time what was our amazement at seeing the lamps, which were still alight, move away, gradually receding, and at last appearing *on the opposite bank!* With negroes it is always like that. Cocoa could not have done better.

Accordingly we had to give up all hope, and made up our minds to spend the night under the stars. But some other negroes appeared, their eyes shining in the dark. They wore no other garments than the cloak of night, and they proposed to take us to some neighbouring Boers. We consented, and presently in the distance saw the light of a farmhouse. A Boer, installed on his verandah, was smoking his pipe, his wife beside him, reading by lamplight. We announced ourselves, and oh! the hearty welcome we received! It was by a mere

chance that we found them at home ; they also had intended to go to Rustenburg, and had been prevented by the sudden rising of a river about half a mile further on. So there was still another !

Pleasantly, cordially, we were led into the dining-room, where a thick carpet covered the floor, and some superb Dutch chests, of charmingly early date, attracted our attention ; in one corner was an interesting book-case. In a twinkling the household was awakened, and the table covered with ham, cheese, rolls ; an exquisite omelette was brought in, with various pastries and tasty fruit. We talked until late in the night, and these good folk, whilst sharing our disappointment, blessed the ill-luck that led us to their roof. I do not know what time it was when I fell asleep in an excellent bed, with fine white linen smelling of lavender. I dreamt vaguely that plashing water surrounded my couch, covered it, and that I slept afloat on the surface.

I woke up in the morning in a bright and pleasant room, flooded with sunshine, at the quiet entrance of a young and friendly negress, bringing me on a tray the inevitable coffee and biscuits. Not to fail in a due observance of the laws of hospitality, I conscientiously consumed this prelude to breakfast.

When I betook myself to the terrace, where a plentiful repast was served, a ravishing picture presented itself to my eyes. Twenty thousand young orange trees were there, planted in perfect symmetry. "All that," the Boer told me, "requires the work of six negroes. Orange cultivation makes rapid progress with us ; three thousand cases were exported six years ago ; to-day we export forty-five thousand ; in five years the production will be in-



creased tenfold." He continued to talk enthusiastically about his work. "You have before you," he said, "the land which produces the finest oranges in the world, thanks to the warm, dry climate, and the rich, well-drained soil. We can supply the London market at times when other orange growers cannot, that is to say, from March to September. It is one of the most remunerative of crops: after six or seven years each tree supplies an average of six hundred oranges, and an annual revenue of a pound sterling." And the Boer smiled to himself as he saw me mentally calculating the considerable amount of his yearly income. "Yes," said he, "the income is fine, only one must wait seven years before receiving it. Ground is dear, twelve hundred and fifty francs an acre, wherein there is space for only a hundred trees; and then it is necessary to water the young plants once a month, and the older trees four times a year. This necessitates a system of irrigation that is often very costly."

"Do you not plant lemon trees?" I asked.

"No, they do not thrive with oranges, and a badly mixed plantation too often yields bitter oranges and sweet lemons. There are some inexplicable freaks in Nature. Look at that chain of hills; on this side the orange grows, but it is impossible to raise apples; on the other side apples abound, whilst orange trees will not live."

Our motor-car, saved from the wreck, now came up. The chauffeur saluted us with a melancholy and discomfited air; all the same, no fault was to be found with the poor fellow. Though he did not succeed, he did his duty—more than his

duty. But thus too frequently it happens in life—success alone counts.

The meeting at Rustenburg took place at noon. It was an obvious failure, for scarcely two hundred were present, whereas the day before an audience of more than six hundred persons had waited for us till ten o'clock. There was a great deal of enthusiasm, as if they wished to make up by the cordiality of their reception for our disappointment, but over it was a sense of annoyance, of constraint, and badly disguised boredom, that characterizes what may be called a "miss-fire." At two o'clock we returned to our saloon carriage, that had been sent on during the night to Rustenburg station; the cook expressed his regret, and announced for our consolation that he had prepared a good dinner. I heard him talking to himself in the kitchen: "What a pity things turned out so badly! After taking all that trouble! Well, well. A miss is as good as a mile, as we say in Paris!"

One of our last meetings in the Transvaal took place at a charming and picturesque spot, a centre of both agriculture and rebels. An audience of eight hundred assembled in a temporary hall, ornamented with Belgian flags and portraits of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth.

A final attempt—which, however, failed—was made with a view to thwarting the Belgian Mission. A newspaper printed in Pretoria, and distributed broadcast for the occasion, contained, in very involved language, a confused blend of eulogy in favour of the delegates and of sympathy for Belgium, while cunningly suggesting that the Boers should *not* attend the meeting, or make any donation to the

Belgians. "The circumstances are so extraordinarily peculiar and so delicate, the Boers are in such a position that it is really difficult for them to show themselves as clamorously pro-Belgian as one would like to suppose them." The paper gave us a good advertisement, and that was its one success. Boers came *en masse* from all parts, and gave us an enthusiastic reception, insisting upon a collection being made at the end of the meeting. This was an excellent evening for the Belgian Relief Fund.

A rather original dispute arose in this little town. Although we had no idea of passing the night there, having arrived in the morning with the intention of setting off again after the meeting, the two principal hotel-keepers of the place, with equal spontaneity and insistence, had reserved rooms for us. The Mayor, a man of wisdom and resource, decided that we should lunch at one hotel and dine at the other.

## CHAPTER XVI

It had been arranged that we should return to Johannesburg on the Saturday, and there enjoy a day and a half's rest. Comfortably installed in an easy chair in my room at the hotel, I was indulging in the ineffable peace of sitting still and shade, when some one announced the Mayor of Johannesburg, one of the most charming men I have ever met. He came to submit to me our week-end programme. Here it is—

### SATURDAY.

- |        |      |   |
|--------|------|---|
| At 2   | p.m. | Visit to the Gold Mines.  |
| „ 5.30 | „    | Meeting at the Dutch Club ( <i>which earnestly desired our company</i> ). |
| „ 7    | „    | Banquet given by the Mayor.   |
| „ 9.30 | „    | Visit to the Cinema.  |

### SUNDAY.

- |         |      |  |
|---------|------|--|
| At 9    | a.m. | Religious service.   |
| „ 10.30 | „    | Kaffir dances.   |
| „ 1     | p.m. | Luncheon with the French Consul-General.                                 |
| „ 3     | „    | Reception, with tea, at Pretoria (75 miles there and back in motor-car). |
| „ 7.30  | „    | Dinner in private.   |

SUNDAY (*continued*).

- At 9 p.m. Performance at the Grand Theatre in aid of the victims of the earthquake in Italy.
- „ 10 „ Meeting at the Democratic Club.
- „ 11 „ Tea at the Carlton.

There was nothing for it but to submit ; long weeks of travelling had initiated us surprisingly in the difficult art of hiding our feelings and accepting with a smile. Moreover, we were so grateful to generous, magnanimous Johannesburg, that it would have been most ungracious not to comply. All the same, setting aside the exhausted condition in which we were, this programme would have fully merited Horace's encomium, *Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci*.

Very soon we were *en route* for the mines of the Rand, pounding over the hard brown rock which, regularly worked ever since 1887, has given, in this quarter of a century, almost 480 million pounds' worth of gold. Two hundred thousand blacks and twenty-five thousand white men are there, six thousand feet down in the bowels of the earth, where the efforts of the engineer, the metallurgist, the chemist, and the mechanic have realized such improvements as science is capable of placing at the service of industry. Machine drills pierce the auriferous quartz, negroes hew the blocks of rock wherein little threads and spots of gold are embedded, and put them on small trucks, which, moved by electricity, move about in every direction. Without a pause the lumps come up, are dropped into a crusher and reduced, with the help of much water,

to a sludge, which is then placed on inclined planes of copper previously coated with mercury. When the mercury is collected, after the sludge has passed over it, the amalgam obtained contains 30 per cent. of gold and 70 per cent. of mercury. The amalgam is volatilized, the mercury evaporates, and the gold remains behind. This gold is afterwards melted. In our presence the workman takes the vessel from a huge furnace by means of long pincers, and pours the contents into a mould; the metal flows away like syrupy, greenish honey. After another boiling, for the purpose of freeing the metal from the final impurities, the pincers grip the mould and plunge it into a first bath of cold water, which instantaneously becomes effervescent; then it has a second bath. With arms extended, the workman, a stout, jolly fellow, takes the mould in his left hand, turns it over upon his right hand, and shows us a block the size of a large oblong paving-sett, with bright yellow tints and pitted with large green spots. This is pure gold, worth four thousand pounds. To give some idea of the proportion between a given quantity of rock and the gold produced, in an office of the Board of Management there has been placed a cubic yard of quartz, and by its side the gold extracted. The last is approximately of the value and size of a forty-franc napoleon: so that twenty-five thousand cubic yards of Rand rock should produce £40,000 worth of gold. The salaries of the white men working in the Rand amount on an average to three hundred and twenty pounds a year. True, living is comparatively dear, but it is not as expensive as one is wont to make out. People can live under middle-class conditions, food

and lighting included, at the rate of eight pounds a month ; a five-roomed house lets for six pounds a month ; bread costs fourpence a pound, mutton and pork tenpence the pound, a dozen eggs about two shillings.

This interesting excursion was followed by a meeting at the Afrikander Club, where the members, to the number of four hundred, received us with open arms. In this club, a centre for meetings and propagandism, it was again necessary to refute German lies, and to reply to current objections firmly believed by some elements of the population.

The banquet in the evening was a luxurious affair, worthy in all respects of the first magistrate of the great city. The toasts were marked by an outpouring of cordial sentiments expressed with force and sincerity. The most solemn pledges were given to follow Belgium in her future evolution, and to participate, by effective help, in her industrial and commercial restoration.

I am not an enthusiast on the subject of cinematographic shows, but the Mayor had given me to understand that he had a surprise in store.

No sooner were we seated than the accents of the *Brabançonne* filled the place, the people who had crowded into the vast hall listening to it standing. Then there appeared on the screen the portraits of our Sovereigns, which the audience applauded enthusiastically. Suddenly I experienced a shock, on seeing on the screen, received with loud cheers, these words : "The Belgian Delegates at Johannesburg." The film unrolled. Our train enters the railway station ; I see myself descend from the saloon

carriage, followed by my colleague; the Mayor advances with the Town Council; presentations, salutations and handshaking; the Mayor makes a short speech, to which I reply briefly. In the background appears Cocoa, grinning and laughing. It is a strange sensation to find one's self on the canvas, all one's movements, the slightest gestures, the most fleeting facial expression reproduced with pitilessly exact fidelity. I gave a sigh of relief when it was over, trusting I had been neither too awkward nor too conspicuous.

Sunday began with Mass at the Roman Catholic Church, a huge Gothic temple filled with the faithful. We were taken there in the state limousine of the town.

At the end of the service the Mayor and the charming Mayoress came to take us to the Kaffir dances. This was an exceptional honour they wished to pay to the Belgian Mission. The event is so rare that the Consul-General of France, who has lived at Johannesburg for more than six years, had never had an opportunity of being present at a like festivity.

The dance took place in a negro village some miles from Johannesburg, at the end of a large square, where seats, shaded by old eucalyptus trees, were reserved for the Belgian Mission, the Mayor of Johannesburg and his family, the French Consul-General and the Belgian Consul-General, the only people admitted to the *fête*. Above our heads the blacks occupied the gallery, perched like monkeys on the branches of the trees.

Punctually to time the Kaffir procession made its



entry. To the number of about two hundred they marched along, at a pace suggestive of excitement and impatience. Their legs in marching had a nervous and jerky movement ; they carried on their arms shields made of some animal's skin, ornamented with incrustations of silver or copper, and in their hands lances or sticks. At the word of command they stopped, formed front, and lined up in perfect order. The picture was strange and vivid ; all these great bronze creatures were decked out in rags of bright, crude colouring, knotted round their hips and chests. Some of them seem to have a certain taste in colour, as, for instance, one Hercules draped in mauve with broad white borderings reaching right down his dusky legs. Various ornaments, red flowers, green tassels, streamers of paper, or knots of ribbon bedecked their frizzled heads.

The orchestra took its place beside us ; twenty-four musicians, each with a drum before him, sticks raised, awaiting the word of command. The master of the dances, a large Kaffir, with his broad chest bare and yellow loin-cloth sprinkled with scarlet dragons, a drum-major's staff in his hand, gave the signal. The musicians brought down their drumsticks ; the instruments gave forth a fluty, bagpipe-like sound in a sweet, slow and monotonous air. The Kaffirs waddled about, holding their shields before their breasts like a tray. They raised and shook the right leg, then the left ; and extended their biceps. It is an exhibition of their physique. They make a hundred contortions, as though to say, "How fine and beautiful we are." All this was in ordered rhythm, done simultaneously, without a

word, without a cry, without breaking the long, straight, faultless line.

Then followed a second movement. The dancers pirouetted like *ballarinas*, on the tips of their toes, then leapt upwards together, and the ground groaned and trembled beneath their feet. With quickening time the orchestra became more lively ; the Kaffirs jumped higher, and spun like peg-tops. Having thus loosened their legs, all took their places again, breathless and dripping, their breasts shining in the sun. In the third performance the dancers, in high excitement, pressed their elbows together, standing shoulder to shoulder. The black faces, lighted up, looked diabolical. The line of blazing eyes was a phosphorescent track, the row of white teeth a long clear line of ivory tusks, the wall of chests a mass of burnished bronze. To the sound of horrible music they chanted in harsh monosyllables a victor's song, and struck their shields one against another. Presently the black wall broke ; in mad confusion they challenged, hailed, defied one another ; it was a riot of bel-lowing and shouting. Every now and then they stopped, lifted their shields into the air with their left hands, while with the right they plunged their sticks into space, with a gesture of ripping something, and a savage cry, *Dzie ! Fough ! Soil !* The music, which had ceased for an instant, resumed its wild outbursts. I saw one performer, who, holding his drum with his feet in the air, beat the instrument energetically with his wrists, while, lying on his back, he executed a shoulder-blade dance solo with vigorous movements of the loins. At this moment the crowd of dancers became mad,

though still quite disciplined ; legs were shaken in the air, arms brandished shields and sticks, the noisy clamour drowned the music. They danced, leapt, spun round dizzily. The whole thing was nothing but a fantastic mix-up of biceps, heads, torsos, legs ; a single stream of bronze flesh, with all around the vaporous winding of red, mauve, green, yellow, copper-coloured loin-cloths, mingling their brilliant colours with the white enamel of teeth and the phosphorescence of eyes. The burning African sun beat down upon this wealth of colouring, such as I had never before witnessed.

The orchestra, engaged on a *furioso* of a strangely provocative nature, suddenly stopped. The mob scattered all over the place, panting chests heaved like the bellows of a forge, human wrecks lay exhausted on the ground. However, the music began again, the stronger ones were on their feet. Dripping with sweat, oily as seals, they danced defiantly, with an air of triumph and warlike gesture, deriding the enfeebled mob and boasting the quality of their muscles and the strength of their ebony bodies. Between-whiles some buffoons, the "Augustes" of the circus, appeared, making a clown's contortions, *danses du ventre*. They were very ugly, and beneath their ludicrous get-up of women's bonnets and Scottish kilts exhibited crooked legs and skeleton bodies. Among them was a very muscular white negro, with short and frizzy hair, a flat nose, very thick lips, and an elongated cranium. He was a negro, sure enough, though entirely white from his hair to his great legs, which he proudly exhibited. The white colour was dull, slightly salmon-tinted, like a thin coat of whitewash unskilfully applied on a black

background. This albino was simply hideous, and will remain in my memory as the very incarnation of ugliness.

Motor-cars arrived to take us to the French Consulate, where we were invited to lunch. We had to leave this extraordinary spectacle, which is in full swing at noon, beneath a grilling sun, at a time of day when the shadow of the dancers falls perpendicularly at their feet. A new procession had just entered upon the scene, the tribe of the Sangais, a superb race, with shining jet-black skin, a lazy and effeminate type, wearing more jewellery than clothing, wreaths of roses on their heads, and light loin-cloths of faded colours. They danced slowly and languorously, making wanton gestures to the tinkle of bells which hung from all over them, from bracelets, necklaces, clothes and hair. They make more sound than movement, while conveying an impression of agility.

All these great children will dance until completely exhausted. They fall down and go to sleep, right in the burning sun, exultant at having lived for an hour the life of a savage, and dream of the happy but very rare days when, in honour of strangers received as chosen guests by the great neighbouring metropolis, the authorities permit a repetition of their old ancestral dances.

The reception at the French Consul-General's was stamped with that peculiar Latin charm which always leaves a sense of mental satisfaction, because the French understand the way of making their hospitalities appeal to the intellect as much as to the heart. Our young fellow-citizen, M. Debeys, who,

in the absence of his chief, filled the office of Consul-General of Belgium with tact and intelligence, was present at this pleasant and intimate gathering. They had invited the most distinguished members of the French Colony at Johannesburg, and all did honour to the excellent Flemish fare prepared by our host's *cordon bleu*.

Amiable M. Dejoux's toast was a masterpiece of tact and simple eloquence. He said that gratitude is inherent in great souls, highly educated and finely intellectual; and if it be true, as is often affirmed, that these are the virtues of France, one must conclude that no nation will be more determined than she is to pay her heavy debt of gratitude to Belgium. "France," he cried, "would be no longer France were she to lay down the sword before Belgium is restored to the full possession of her rights and ruins." I warmly thanked the Consul-General for his noble words, and proposed in my turn a toast in honour of the great and brave French nation, which appears once more in history as the wall of iron that barbarism will not pass.

In the evening a charity performance took place at the great Johannesburg theatre, in aid of the victims of the recent earthquake in Italy. We had thought it our duty to be present at this manifestation of sympathy for a country still officially united to Germany, but already semi-officially standing in with the Allies. The moment we appeared in our box we were warmly acclaimed, the music struck up the *Brabançonne*, to which the audience listened standing. The Consul-General of Italy came into our box to greet us, and thank us warmly for this mark of cordiality and esteem for his country.

"This compliment of the Belgian Mission," said he, "is, I can assure you, very highly appreciated."

It was necessary to leave the performance at about ten o'clock, in order to attend the meeting of the Union Club, at which my colleague and I were to speak. There was a tremendous crowd of more than two thousand people, and an outburst of enthusiasm as warm as the tropical temperature. The circular shape of the building, with the platform in the middle, put us in direct contact with the audience surrounding us on every side. When I spoke of King Albert, there was an explosion of wild enthusiasm, that lasted some minutes. Belgian flags, handkerchiefs and hats were waved, whilst ringing cheers drowned the notes of the orchestra, which was playing the *Brabançonne*. I came away about midnight, worn out with the emotion experienced in the course of this finest and never-to-be-forgotten demonstration of the inhabitants of Johannesburg, more than seven thousand of whom had listened to us during our stay in that town.

The next day, having said good-bye to Johannesburg, we sent a warmly worded telegram to the Mayor, telling him how grateful we were to the great and generous metropolis of the Transvaal. Generous, indeed, it had been towards the Belgians; I have been given the total of the subscriptions at the time of our visit there, but I dare not quote it, as the sum seems to me exaggerated. But I should fail in all my duties did I not here draw attention to the indefatigable zeal with which some devoted friends of Belgium managed to arouse public generosity in Africa. I shall not

mention any individual ; there are names that I cannot help remembering, but I fear that, if I gave some of the most deserving, I might forget others equally meritorious. Some future day, solemn homage will be rendered to those who devoted themselves with such admirable success to the interests of our dear countrymen, who, under German rule, would have known all the horrors of hunger but for the noble intervention of the civilized world.

## CHAPTER XVII

AFTER our last meeting in the Transvaal, we reached the scorching frontiers of Natal, in a state bordering on exhaustion. Willingly would we have begged for a truce from receptions and festivities, so loudly did poor human nature cry out for a little privacy and repose. But we did not know Natal, or the degree of enthusiasm and lavish hospitality that exists amongst these citizens of South Africa. Once more the imperious spirit of duty asserted itself, and made us brace our nerves to meet a veritable avalanche of kind attentions.

Our passage through the province was a triumphal march. At the frontier we were welcomed in the name of the Governor, and at the same time some one offered us copies of one of the principal Natal newspapers, an *édition de luxe*, containing portraits of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth, photographs of the Belgian delegates, and a symbolic picture representing, under the aspect of two women, Natal saluting Belgium, the first leaning one hand upon a large alms-box, labelled "Belgian Relief Fund," the other holding a parchment sealed with the seal of the province, and bearing the inscription, "Address of Welcome to the Belgian Delegates." Under the figures was printed: "I am proud to greet your



delegates, but sorry that it should be under such painful circumstances."

The journals were full of enthusiastic articles about their Majesties the King and Queen, the valiant Belgian army, and the members of the Mission. It was a truly delicate attention to reproduce, on my behalf, some literary extracts about Bruges, "the marvellous city, with its lofty and pleasing outlines, the city where every street is a vision, and which one traverses as though in a romance, whilst from the sky descends the magic chaunt of the Carillon."

I note, as particularly interesting, the following article, headed "Something more than speaking."

"The delegates of Belgium have done something more than make speeches in South Africa! M. Standaert, President of the Law Society, and Parliamentary Representative of Bruges—the town that rivals Florence—and Dr. Van der Perre, Parliamentary Representative for Antwerp—the great commercial centre—have been busily and actively engaged in efforts to establish durable relations with this country. The principal mission of the delegates was to publish the truth with regard to events that have occurred in Belgium and atrocities that have been committed. They have not failed to effect this. The speeches of the Belgian representatives have aroused vivid and intense feelings of horror of barbarism, and admiration for the Belgians. As for those who, for one reason or another, were blinded by doubt, they have had the scales removed from their eyes; they also have seen and understood, and have shuddered when confronted by the

horrible truth. It is quite obvious that the mission of the Belgian Delegates has been an immense success.

“But besides this, the delegates have seen and observed men and facts amongst us ; they have noted and established many facts which will be of great value to their Government when the Belgians, with hearts filled with anguish, but also with energy and hope, shall return to their ruined country. In the new economic conditions that will prevail throughout the world, Belgium, whose valour saved Europe, merits the largest compensation, not in gifts, for which indeed she is grateful to us, but in economic privileges in her commercial relations with Great Britain and her Dominions. That is the true and only practical means of restoring a ruined world, and of aiding King Albert to obtain full repossession of his kingdom.”

It is pleasant to us to emphasize these latter points. In Natal, as in the Transvaal, our relations with the leading men of the country convinced us that many are in favour of a policy of economic goodwill towards Belgium. The Dominions are often represented as anchored to an uncompromising attitude of political selfishness. It is not so in South Africa. Certainly our investigations met with slight though strong opposition, but the arguments were of a rather personal nature. One of the few things we regret as regards our mission is that we were not able to devote sufficient time to spread more widely the ideas with which the future of our country is so closely bound up.

When I think to-day of the enthusiastic demon-

strations, the stirring scenes that developed one after another during our wanderings in Natal, I often ask myself how, in our exhausted condition, we were able to last out. Telegrams arrived from twenty different places begging us to address more meetings; we had to reply that it was impossible. Whereupon the populace, Mayor and Town Council at its head, met us at the railway stations, cheering us and offering us flowers, so that we had to make speeches from the railway carriage itself. At one place, the name of which I forget, a dense crowd had assembled, among them the school-children waving little Belgian flags. They obtained permission for the train to stop over time in the station, and forthwith an open-air meeting was organized.

At another place the Socialist Town Councillors, headed by the Mayor, received us in frock-coats and silk hats. This was the only occasion on which we saw tall hats in Africa. These magistrates, all of them workmen, had raked them out from the recesses of their wardrobes, to do honour to the Belgian Mission.

The Mayor's little girls, charming children, presented us with bouquets, whilst amid enthusiastic applause we took our places in the flower-decked carriages ornamented with Belgian flags. And what a meeting we had! "It was," said the report, "a memorable meeting, the recollection of which will long endure. The impressive speeches of the delegates, recounting the atrocities committed in Belgium, roused storms of indignation and emotion in the vast audience. Many present, on hearing the account of crimes committed upon women and poor little children, manifested aloud their detestation

of the murderers and their sympathy with the victims. At certain moments, when the speakers, in accents of touching eloquence, recalled the misfortunes of Belgium, the whole hall was in tears."

What can I say of the receptions, at Vryheid, at Greytown, at Dundee—where it was necessary to hold two meetings—at Newcastle, where the reception was of such overwhelming cordiality, that the report humorously remarked that the Belgian delegates lost the chance of exclaiming in English: "Newcastle wants to kill us with kindness"?

When we got out of the train at Ladysmith, a body of troops, happening to be at the station, formed up and presented arms. I paused, saluted, and shook hands with the commanding officer, while loud cheers came from the ranks, as enthusiastic as they were out of order.

In this pretty town, which has five thousand inhabitants, and whose name recalls in many ways various phases of the Boer War, it was strange for us to hear the Mayor—who was surrounded by the chief men of the town—exclaim: "Your visit to our midst will be inscribed in letters of gold in the annals of Ladysmith. We welcome in you the little nation whose valour, heroism, and resolution saved Europe by checking the advance of a formidable enemy during the time needed to allow England and France to put themselves in line and march forward."

In the principal street of Ladysmith, rising above the classic front of the Town Hall, is the square tower, crowned by a cupola greatly damaged by Boer shells. After sixteen years, like a great wounded creature, it still shows the marks of war. In my

room at the hotel I found a large hole in the wall, the souvenir of the passage of a Boer shell. A glass covers the opening, converting it into a novel and historic window.

Ladysmith! Under a lowering sky, dark with storm, the sun filtering through in flashes of pale gold on to a dark background, we started on a pilgrimage to the historic burial-grounds.

In the heart of a picturesque valley is Wagon Hill. Here are six hundred graves, a vista of little white crosses piously framed in flowers, the battle-field and burial-place of the valiant Devonshire Regiment. Farther on, in the dull silence of an empty plain, a treeless, uncultivated expanse, with delicate tints of purple heather, we encountered more crosses and graves. Here and there were *isolated* kopjes, rising suddenly from the plain with their quaint, faultless cones. Suddenly in front of us arose a higher and more massive cone, on the bare flat summit of which were several white crosses, and a hexagonal block of black and white stone bearing many names, the flower and pride of English youth, high-born and lowly, who had fallen there. This was Spion Kop.

Spion Kop! What a host of tragic memories it arouses. And when, after my return to Europe, I saw in London the great newspaper posters announcing the victory of Botha's commandos, and the taking of Windhoek, the capital of German South-West Africa, instantaneously before my eyes I saw once more the grand outline of Spion Kop.

Windhoek—Spion Kop: 1900—1915. A suggestive contrast, a phenomenon at once wonderful and dramatic. Many a time we were witnesses of

the conflict in the Boer mind, as it wavered between rebellion and loyalty. After the meetings Boers often made the artless confession from their trusting and simple hearts: "We are grateful to you for having opened our eyes to the truth; henceforth all is over between us and the barbarian, that traitor to his word, that murderer of your small, admirable nation, which is so peace-loving and so good. But all the same, the temptation was strong! Just think; it is only twelve years ago; we have not had time to forget! We still cannot think without a shudder of the terrible war in which we were then engaged."

When "the whirligig of time" will allow their just proportions to be assigned to things in the clear light of the great struggle through which we shall have passed, there will emerge, as an episode beyond all human foresight, the participation in the World War of these Boers of the South African Union.

It is difficult to picture the attractive beauty of Natal. The land of Chaka, of Dingaan, of Cetewayo, is a country of captivating charm, whose views in places rival the most exquisite sights of Nature. It took us only eight days, in a vehicle drawn by sixteen oxen, to make the splendid excursion to the Mont aux Sources, with its wild, enticing peaks, twelve thousand feet high. But we had not the keenness needed to take us up *them*.

Natal is a privileged land, in which grow the finest and most varied fruits in the world, from the cocoa-nut of the torrid zone to the hazel-nut of northern countries; orange trees, mandarin orange, lemon trees are found in company with pear, apple, and plum trees. Here grows the delicate granadilla,

from which housekeepers make an exquisite cream, called "angels' food," and luscious pineapples multiply as if by magic; these are eaten with spoons, a whole pineapple being allotted to each guest.

One day, *en route* for Greytown, a Dutch oasis in typically British Natal, we had to go sixty-three miles in a motor-car. This was a journey of astonishing and unexpected beauty. The car climbed the mountains whilst the most varied panoramas unrolled themselves before our eyes. There were plenty of trees, chiefly forests of wattle, *Acacia mollissima*, whose bark is exported in ever-increasing quantities. In 1896 the output was worth fifteen thousand pounds sterling; in 1914 it amounted to two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

Here and there are fields of tea, tobacco and sugar; all these are in the early stages of development, but justify great hopes. Already the annual production of sugar is worth five hundred thousand pounds.

As natural king of this garden of delights, the Zulu, in the sculptured beauty of his chosen race, moves about these sun-kissed, picturesque fields in the pride of his bronzed body and sturdy legs. The beauty of the Zulu race, which is said to be allied with Arab blood, is proverbial, and not to be overrated: it is attributed to the absence of prostitution, and grim respect for the marriage laws. One must have seen processions of young Zulu women, graceful as lyre-birds, clad in a girdle round the breast, and a sort of masonic apron of beads, returning from market in Indian file, to understand how this type is almost a challenge to the sculptor and the artist. I shall long have before my eyes the memory

of an enormous Zulu, bronze-coloured, in the bright sunshine, leading six ruddy oxen, clad only in a monkey-skin tobacco pouch. With his tall and supple form, and solemn, measured walk, he somewhat resembled the black king in Rubens's picture of "The Magi." Alas ! the population here is only for show, its value to the Colony is very low. The people are pastoral, but lazy beyond words, and give little help in rendering productive eleven million acres of useful land, which, in Natal alone, remain abandoned, as compared with but one million which are cultivated and fruitful.

The problem of the blacks, the conditions of their work, and their civil and political rights, is one of those which have long been discussed throughout the colonies of the Union, but never solved. In certain provinces the blacks are regarded as mere pariahs, who may not walk on the footpath, attend meetings of white people, or travel in trains and public vehicles, except in separate compartments : in short, they are beyond the pale. In Cape Colony, however, certain privileges are allowed them, and they enjoy even property and electoral rights. The discussions to which the recent fundamental law in the different provincial parliaments, before the formation of the Union, gave rise, revived the question of the rights of the blacks. Amongst those who, with great courage and tenacious eloquence, defended the cause of the natives, the first place should be given to one of the leading advocates of the South African bar, the Right Honourable W. P. Schreiner.

I had the honour of meeting in London this eminent *confrère* of the Capetown Bar, at the time



when he was fulfilling the important functions of High Commissioner of the South African Union. He is a specially gifted man, of fine intellect and sympathetic mind. He became a Minister when but thirty-five years old, and Prime Minister of Cape Colony at the time of the Boer War. He is a perfect gentleman of engaging manner, with a pleasant smile which lights up his eyes and brightens his sympathetic face. In spite of all the honours he has known, he has remained thoroughly and entirely a lawyer, regretting the political fate which has separated him from his practice at the Bar, at once so interesting and so exciting. When one reads again the speeches in which Mr. Schreiner, in the Cape Parliament, defended the rights of the natives against Mr. Merriman, one feels that, after all, the lawyer in him takes precedence over the politician, going so far as to despise popularity in order to plead for that ideal of right and justice which is so near his heart.

The question of the blacks was not settled in the South Africa Act, but each of these skirmishes helps to break down long-standing prejudices, and is a step towards a just solution, necessarily slow—as is civilization itself in the very heart of the negro population.

While returning from our expedition to Greytown, we met with a strange adventure. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and we were passing through a wood, when all of a sudden, from behind a thicket, there burst a lively fusillade. The startled chauffeur stopped to examine his brakes: some charming young ladies advanced, followed by three gentlemen, holding their guns in their hands, and

smilingly invited us to tea, thanking God that their little stratagem had succeeded so well. In their delightful country home, wherein the portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians had a prominent place, this tea, offered *manu militari*, was indeed "sweet."

On arriving at Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, we were greeted at the station by the Administrator of the Colony and the Mayor of the city, and a large crowd gave us a most enthusiastic welcome. All about the station the people were struggling for the Belgian edition of a local journal, which published many fully illustrated articles about Belgium. In one of them I found reproduced that charming poem, "The Belfry of Bruges."

"In the ancient town of Bruges,  
In the quaint old Flemish city,  
As the evening shades descended,  
Low and loud and sweetly blended,  
Low at times and loud at times,  
And changing like a poet's rhymes,  
Rang the beautiful wild chimes  
From the Belfry in the Market  
Of the ancient town of Bruges."

The Governor and the Mayor conducted us to the hotel; we had just time to make a change when we found ourselves in a sumptuous dining-hall, decked with Belgian flags, before a table laden with plate and beautiful flowers. Eighty guests were assembled, invited by the Mayor, and including about thirty ladies, richly dressed.

Everything was very strange and surprising in the country of the Zulus. Out in the street the hired carriages were drawn by young blacks, decked

in feathers, with copper rings in their noses or ears. Along the pavement of the suburbs pass the ebony-coloured men, who, owing to their passion for tobacco, are dressed scarcely more fully than Adam in his earthly Paradise : a wild and primitive nature surrounds you in its fauna and flora, and here, in this *salon*, was taking place a great dinner of which the most ceremonious European host might be proud. Here is the *menu* of this repast in the country of the Zulus—

DINNER GIVEN BY THE MAYOR AND MAYORESS  
OF PIETERMARITZBURG

IN HONOUR OF THE BELGIAN MISSION  
VISITING SOUTH AFRICA.

MENU

Croûtes d'Anchois  
Consommé Princesse  
Soles Frites  
Selle de Mouton  
Ris de Veau aux petits pois  
Dindonneau Rôti  
Pudding Cabinet  
Pâté de Foie Gras  
Dessert.

An orchestra performed during the repast, and played "God save the King" after the toast of the King, and *La Brabançonne* after that of the Belgian delegates.

The Mayor's speech was a fine specimen of cordial and fiery eloquence ; I quote the closing passage—

"The human language has no words to express adequately what humanity owes to little Belgium for resisting the might of Germany in the early days of the war.

"Let us confine ourselves simply to paying a humble tribute of praise to the noble Queen of our guests, who has made for herself a name apart for heroism and generosity of heart! Let us express our utmost admiration, an admiration that knows no bounds, for the Belgian people and their valiant army; they have gathered imperishable laurels in history! I do not hesitate to say that the name of Albert I. will go down to posterity as that of a giant among a band of heroes. To those brave fellows who, by prodigies of valour and of tenacity, saved England and France, our wishes and our hopes go out—our wishes for a prompt and full restoration of Belgium, our hopes of seeing a people rise greater and stronger than ever from this ocean of suffering."

Two thousand people attended the meeting the same evening. Amid the utmost enthusiasm, the following resolution, proposed by the Administrator, was passed—

"The citizens of Pietermaritzburg, here assembled, sympathize from the bottom of their hearts with the noble Belgian nation. They express their profound horror of the brutalities and crimes committed upon the peace-loving citizens of Belgium. They sincerely hope that peace will never be entertained until Belgium has obtained the very fullest compensation for all the wrongs which have been

inflicted upon her. They offer their best wishes for the future prosperity of Belgium, and beg the delegates to convey to His Majesty, King Albert, and to the people of Belgium, their homage, admiration and goodwill."

Early next morning the train bore us away on the long journey towards Durban. At all the stations and stopping-places crowds of people were met together, and we had to make speeches, so to speak, hour after hour. At one place loud shouts and youthful voices were heard, and above them the strains of the *Brabançonne*—it was all the young people of a college, who had come a long way, with the neighbouring populace, to greet and welcome us.

The route was extremely beautiful: all the morning the train climbed upwards amid semi-tropical scenery, until, after a journey of three more hours, Durban became visible from the top of a mountain. At that distance, in the dusty and diaphanous atmosphere, Durban looked like a white queen enthroned in verdure beside the azure ocean. And when by degrees details became perceptible,—tiers of villas, tropical vegetation, wide avenues, sumptuous palaces, the magnificent port with its perfect port equipment,—it seemed like a vision of the apotheosis of the beauty, wealth and glorious future of South Africa.

## CHAPTER XVIII

IN the magnificent reception-room of the Town Hall at Durban, not only were the three thousand seats occupied, but members of the audience had to be content with standing room. At the request of the Municipal Council I had agreed to speak in French, and I put my whole heart into my speech, as the least I could do when facing a population that had subscribed the sum of six thousand pounds for our compatriots.

It was amid the most intense emotion, and scarcely restrained outbursts of disgust, that I introduced into my speech a few extracts from the official inquiries, limiting them to a certain kind of atrocities.

Here is the sad and horrible tale of martyrdom—

“On August 18, 1914, the German soldiers, entering into the village of Schaffen, near Diest, met a young man, twenty-three years of age, André Willens, sacristan. They stopped him, tied him to a tree, and heaped dry wood about him; the unfortunate man was then burned alive.

“On August 28, at Sempst, a workman, arrested by German soldiers, was covered with petrol, and thrown into a burning house. A little farther on a man was seized, the murderers cut off his legs, and

then hurled the human trunk into the flames. At the same place, a woman trying to escape from the fire was beaten to death with the butt-end of a rifle, on her own threshold.

"On August 26, near Malines, was found the corpse of an old man, hung by the hands from a post on his farm, the legs and the lower part of the body burnt to a cinder.

"At Wolverthem, German soldiers found two badly wounded Belgian soldiers lying in a ditch; they took them on their shoulders right up to a burning house, and threw them alive into the flames.

"On August 23, at Surice, in the province of Namur, an old man of eighty-eight, who had been wounded, was rolled in a bed-quilt by German soldiers, and set on fire.

"At Hérent, and at Sempst, in the province of Brabant, the German soldiery burnt the village, whilst at all points men were posted to shoot the unfortunate beings who tried to escape from their burning houses.

"At Triancourt German soldiers set fire to a house inhabited by the owner, Jules Gaud: when the unfortunate man tried to get out, and thus escape being burnt alive, he was shot.

"At Hartennes, having discovered three persons lying in a cellar, the Germans brought some straw and set it on fire; the poor creatures were very soon corpses.

"On August 20, at Nomeny, where the population had taken refuge in cellars, the Germans, after pillaging everything, set fire to the village. The inhabitants, driven out by the flames, were shot in

succession as they tried to escape, by German soldiers posted at different points, as though they were hunting game.

"In a suburb of Nancy, the Germans entered a house where a certain number of people had taken refuge. After pillaging everything they set the house on fire. M. Mentré, his son Léon,—carrying in his arms his little three-year-old sister,—M. and Mme. Kieffer, their boy of ten and little girl of three, tried to escape the flames, but were murdered one after the other by the soldiers of the Kaiser, at the very edge of the conflagration.

"At the same place, one Sieur Pouisard, a farmer, the father of five children, was burned alive by slow fire, in his barn.

"At Meixhe, M. Demange was wounded in both legs in his own house, and so rendered incapable of escaping, after which the Germans set fire to the house, wherein the unhappy man was burnt alive.

"On October 16, at Gerbéviller, M. Lingenheld, at the moment of leaving his house, fell, hit by a bullet. When the young man's mother ran up to help her son, the German soldiers emptied upon his clothes the contents of a cask of petrol, and set it alight in the presence of his mother!

"You shudder with horror! I can understand it. The human heart refuses to entertain such monstrosities, and were it not for the certainty resulting from official inquiries, conducted by men of the highest respectability and well-proved judgment, for the honour of humanity one would like to say 'It is not true!' Alas! the enormity of the crimes committed by Germany is such that the stain



will never be effaced, any more than that which after twenty centuries clings to the ignominious memory of a Herod.

“Herod—the slaughterer of children.

“A child ! Is there in all the world anything that inspires greater respect and tenderness than the purity of that innocent and frail being ? On the threshold of the twentieth century it has needed the brutal instinct of the Germans to kill the being of whom it has been said so gracefully that ‘it only opens its lips to smile and its mouth to ask questions.’

“At Gelrode, in the province of Liège, the German soldiers found hidden in a church, and almost dead with fright, seven children, the eldest of whom was not twelve years old : they drove them with their swords into the public square, where they killed them, one after the other.

“At Vedrin, a province of Namur, the Germans saw a child playing in the street with some empty cartridge cases from a German gun ; they took aim and killed him.

“At Andenne, a great red-haired German, passing before a woman carrying her baby in her arms, killed the child on its mother’s breast with his sword.

“In the same village of Andenne, meeting a woman holding her tiny boy by the hand, the soldiery, without any reason, took aim and shot both mother and child.

“Andenne is a place in Belgium where there was not even the slightest skirmish ; not a single German soldier was killed there, nor in the immediate neighbourhood.

"At Dinant, M. Wasseige, a bank-manager, having refused to reveal to the German housebreakers the secret of the safe of which he had charge, was brought to the public square and there killed with his two elder sons. His three younger children, held up by the soldiers, were forced to look on at the murder of their father.

"At Dinant alone these wretches executed thirty-nine children of both sexes !

"At Surice, they arrested the tiny son of Dr. Jacques, and in spite of the entreaties of the child, who wept and cried that he did not wish to die, the brave Germans shot him.

"Near Louvain a woman was sobbing over the body of her husband, killed in the open street, when a German officer passed by and she asked : "What had he done to you ?" "He had fired," said the officer. "And had *he* fired too ?" said the poor woman, pointing to the corpse of her little child, lying not far from the father.

"At Schaffen, on August 18, 1914, the Germans discovered, hiding in a drain, a woman and her daughter of twelve ; they were shot. A little further on they met the woman Ooyen and her little girl of nine, as well as a man named Reynders with his two-year-old nephew ; they stopped them, and all were shot.

"At Hofstade, on August 25, the corpse of a young Belgian of fourteen was found pierced by German bayonets.

"Near Malines a child of fifteen, his hands tied behind his back, was killed in the same way.

"On August 23, at Lives, the valiant Germans, attacking a detachment of Belgian soldiers, pushed

in front of them the wives and children of the latter ; several of them fell under Belgian bullets.

“At Sommeilles, the Adnot family had taken refuge in a cellar. The German soldiers found them, and the father was shot. The mother, with one arm and one breast cut off, soon died ; the little girl of eleven had a foot cut off ; the throat of the little boy of five was cut. The mother and little girl had been subjected to the most infamous outrages.

“In the open street at Clermont was found the corpse of a boy of eleven who had been shot.

“At Lunéville the German soldiers broke into the house of a woman named Dujon, and set fire to it ; the mother, while escaping, saw her son, a lad of fourteen, stretched on the floor, and urged him to rise and fly with her ; the poor fellow could not do it, he had been ripped open by a sabre cut ; he was burnt alive. A man named Wingerstmann and his child of twelve, returning from work in the fields, were stopped by German soldiers, and shot on the spot.

“At the same place the Germans encountered a small boy named Sibille, and pierced his poor little body with twenty stabs of their saw-bayonets. One of the eye-witnesses tells that after this exploit the Germans showed one another their weapons covered with blood and scraps of flesh.

“At Crévie, seeing from the street a boy aged seven hidden in a cellar, the soldiers fired upon him, severely wounding the child, and also a lady.

“At Hériménil, orders were given to the population to assemble at the church. Mme. Wuiger and three young men passed before a German Commandant, who, without any sufficient motive beyond

his desire to have young enemy citizens murdered, gave the order to fire, and four victims fell, mortally wounded.

"In the Belgian village of Tamines, where no fighting of any kind had taken place, they have, so far, drawn up a list of twenty-six children massacred by the Germans.

"At Thildonck, near Louvain, on August 25, a German detachment broke into a farm occupied by the family of Valckenaers. Only a woman and some children were there, all of whom were shot in succession: Louise, aged eighteen years; Mélanie, sixteen; Joseph, fourteen; Jeanne, six and a half; Victorine, aged two years and a half—the hands of the last were round her mother's neck at the moment the ball fractured her skull.

"You shudder with horror and pity—I see the emotion that thrills you. However, I have told you scarcely a fraction of the truth; there are some facts so horrible they could not be described before these ladies, some deeds so monstrous that a public assembly could not listen to an account of them.

"Besides, is it not enough to have shown you this evening the German in his double rôle of barbarian—the very image of Herod, massacring children, and the rival of Nero, burning Christians in the gardens of the Palatine?

"You know how Germany, with a view to excusing the atrocities committed, tries to white-wash herself by accusing the Belgians. Agents in the pay of Germany have travelled through the Transvaal and Orange Free State, slandering my fellow-countrymen in a most horrible and atrocious

manner. Everywhere we have rectified these slanders by restoring its good name, reputation and honour to a martyred people.

“But to-day, after reading the last mail that has come to me from Europe, I have to ask myself whether these wretches in the pay of Germany are not perhaps acting in good faith. On September 6, 1914, the Chancellor of the Empire, von Bethmann Hollweg, receiving the representatives of the great American publicity agencies, said to them, ‘We are accused of cruelties, gentlemen, but you have not been told that on the battlefield young Belgian girls put out the eyes of our wounded.’ Need one be astonished by German slanders when one sees a person in von Bethmann Hollweg’s position compromise his honour and his good name by spreading abroad this most hideous invention?

“In September 1914, Mademoiselle Leman, daughter of the glorious defender of Liège, asked leave to go and visit her wounded father, a prisoner in Germany. Would you like to know the reply she got? ‘It would be a provocation in the eyes of the German people to authorize your coming here, since the German prisoners and wounded are being treated by Belgian women in a way that is unworthy of civilized beings.’ I wonder which must have been the more painful for poor Mademoiselle Leman, the refusal of her request, or the odious insult in which German delicacy clothed the refusal?

“Oh that outrage upon our good Belgian women! My soul burns, my blood boils at such cowardice and infamy! But it seems that already a remorseful conscience has brought some shame even

to the Germans. On November 22, 1914, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* confessed that the accusations against the Belgian women were untrue. The *Vorwärts* of the same date published a series of articles entitled, *The Legend of the Put-out Eyes*. 'The report,' says the newspaper, 'got abroad in consequence of a great number of the wounded having their eyes put out by shrapnel, which very often hits the eyes.' The journal gives, to support 'the pure legend theory,' a number of German witnesses. Have I not the right to go to the Kaiser's Chancellor and say to him, 'There are some customs, sir, which by universal agreement mark the gentleman: respect for woman, consideration due to her honour, dignity and weakness. There is nothing that lowers a man more than to insult and slander a woman. I leave you to pass judgment on your attitude. But above all do not excuse yourself now; our Belgian women are so far superior to outrages that your excuses would be an insult to them.'

"Ah! they will never succeed in tarnishing the unsullied fame of my noble country! Decked with the laurels of honour, emaciated with the pangs of hunger, gloriously sullied by German filth, Belgium appears to the world only the more beautiful and great, the more worthy of support and love.

"As for Germany, her destiny must be fulfilled. Germany announces that in the immediate future, by the aid of submarines, she intends to kill in cold blood civilians, women and children sailing over the peaceful waters of the Atlantic. This is in the order of things; the bloody laurels of the soldier

assassins and hangmen shelter the sailor murderers and pirates.

“Let us turn aside from these barbarities and, in order to cleanse our eyes from the stain of having looked at them, contemplate one of the finest beings that do honour to humanity.

“I see there, in the trenches of Flanders, a man of noble and martial bearing, tall, with aristocratic features, stooping a little however, as though vexed by the fact that he is a head taller than the brave fellows around him. He is in the firing line, and day and night he shares with the humblest soldier the fatigues of war and the dangers of combat. This man was born for peace—the dream of his patriotism, wholly devoid of ambition, was to spread amongst his people the benefits of social fellowship and fraternity.

“But the barbarians came and wished to take from him and enslave the people he loved so well, the beloved corner of the earth that he had sworn to keep intact, fully independent and inviolate.

“And this man, almost timid by nature, has been transformed into a hero; for the last shred of his country, beside the last of his men, he fights like a lion.

“Ah! how good and pleasant it is to turn towards this manly figure, and contemplate the unsullied beauty of his valour and manhood.

“Oh, my beloved King! I am the humblest of your subjects, but my tongue cannot tell how proud I am of you! Borne on your noble shoulders, Belgium appears only the greater; and to-morrow, richer and more prosperous than ever, she will be

swept amid the world's applause towards the new destiny that your valour will have won for her."

I cannot describe how that immense assembly cheered Belgium and the King. The French Consul came and pressed both my hands, whilst the enthusiastic audience cheered me to the echo.



## CHAPTER XIX

OVER the blue waves of the Indian Ocean the *Dover Castle* was bearing us upon our homeward voyage, a distance of seven thousand five hundred miles.

We had, however, to disembark again at East London, and at Port Elizabeth. It was pleasant once more to greet Messrs. Mounsal and Holland, Belgian Vice-Consuls, who have so distinguished themselves by their care of Belgian interests.

At Port Elizabeth, as I entered the hall where our meeting took place, I felt a momentary shrinking from the human tide which washed round our feet. Imagine the hall of the station at Malines closed at both ends, and containing four thousand persons: such was the meeting at Port Elizabeth. What brave hearts! How they applauded their eloquent young Mayor when he said: "Did the martyrs of the early ages shed their blood in vain? Did our ancestors, who died for justice and right, make useless sacrifice of their lives? We answer No! But in these days heroism and bravery have reached unlooked-for heights; the generations to come will thrill with admiration on reading of the great deeds now being written in the pages of history by noble and glorious Belgium." It was with all the sincerity of my soul that I exclaimed:

"We did not think it would be possible to come here, but after seeing what I see, and hearing what I hear, it would have been the eternal regret of my life not to have come."

A few weeks after our return to Europe, the Vice-Consul at Port Elizabeth wrote to me that the enthusiasm in favour of Belgium was such that he counted upon being able to send, in a few days, the sum of four thousand pounds for the Relief Fund.

All the authorities of Port Elizabeth escorted us to the steamer leaving for Capetown, and it was with feelings of the most profound gratitude that we bade farewell to the charming city whose motto, *In meliora spera*, we carried away as a symbol and a hope.

The *Balmoral Castle*, which was to take us to London, did not leave Capetown until some days later.

Cordial demonstrations became more and more frequent, and it was necessary to hold more meetings, notably at Caledon, where an exclusively Boer audience fêted us, and we had to receive numerous delegates who came to prove their sympathy and generosity. Did not the Mayor of one humble village come to bring us four hundred and eighty pounds, subscribed by his four thousand fellow townsmen? I cannot pass over in silence—it moved us even to tears—the behaviour of two young Capetown men, who having saved up for a holiday tour, unanimously abandoned their plans, and gave us the contents of their money-box, amounting to three hundred pounds.

On the eve of our departure, the Governor-General, Lord Buxton, who had taken up his

residence at Capetown on account of the opening of Parliament, invited us to an official dinner with the Ministers, the Presidents of the two Houses and Mr. Merriman. His Excellency was particularly interested in the Belgian Mission and repeatedly paid us the most marked attentions. This afforded us an opportunity of expressing to the Governor-General and members of the Government our gratitude for the support and goodwill accorded to our mission, and for the numerous facilities that had enabled us to bring to a successful conclusion the task entrusted to us by the Belgian Government.

We took advantage of a chance of being present at the formal opening of Parliament. A place was reserved for us on the left of the throne, whence Lord Buxton, seated and wearing his hat, read his speech. When he had finished, the Governor-General ceremoniously caused the translation to be handed to the President of the Senate, Mr. Reitz, who read the speech from the throne in the Dutch language.

At the end of the sitting, a party of representatives invited us to lunch in the Parliament buildings, and Mr. Merriman presided at an informal and to some extent brotherly meal.

At one of the meetings of the Houses we had an opportunity of following the bilingual debates, listening to Mr. Merriman and Sir Thomas Smart discourse in English, and General Hertzog in faultless Dutch.

We passed our last evening in the company of the French Consul-General at Capetown, M. Jore, who very kindly invited us to dinner. Until a late hour, sitting in a dream-like garden, in the in-

expressible sweetness of the African night, ethereal and limpid as the perfume in which it is bathed, we discussed at length our impressions and our hopes.

Just as we were leaving Africa, on board the *Balmoral Castle*, broadside on to the marvellous shores of Table Bay, we received a visit from a party of soldiers, tall and graceful, sturdy and slender, with mild blue eyes, typical Boer youths, exceptionally well built. In their musical and simple Dutch they said :

“ We have come to say *au revoir*, and to request the happiness of shaking hands with you. We attended the great meeting at Pretoria and heard your speeches : that same evening we decided to enlist as volunteers, to go and fight against the barbarians who have martyred our poor Flemish brothers. In a few days we start for South-West Africa, and when it is all finished over there, if it please God, we shall go on to Flanders.”

Oh, dear and noble Belgium ! How sublime is your cause, thus to arouse, even in the farthest confines of the world, the generosity and self-sacrifice, the ardent bravery of so many noble souls, stimulated by the example you have given of the highest virtues that adorn humanity!

## CHAPTER XX

A MOTOR-CAR from Grand Headquarters came to convey us to Dunkirk. Along the route we made a passage for ourselves through dense ranks of soldiers, Belgian soldiers, broad-backed and thick-set ; they recognized the car from a distance, and quickly fell into line, saluting respectfully.

Our brave troopers looked well ; nothing in their appearance betrayed the six long months of an atrocious war. The spirit of the men is good, astonishingly good, showing itself in their lively air, at once jovial and resolute. Ah ! with what respect we saluted these dear soldiers, the last hope of our Fatherland.

We felt this all the more as we advanced ; to right and left, dug down into the fertile soil of Belgium, we saw trenches, those deep furrows where lies the grain of youth that will give us the harvest of victory.

At Z—— the motor-car stopped, and the *gendarme* on duty conducted us into the modest house which is now the palace of the King of the Belgians.

An orderly saluted us, and told us that the King was engaged in conference with the Generals, and that we should be received first by the Queen. In a large middle-class drawing-room, simply but com-

fortably furnished, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth gave us a gracious welcome, a melancholy smile upon her lips.

The Queen, whom we had had the honour of meeting scarcely a year ago, at the palace in Brussels, pale, and very delicate-looking, appears to be very much stronger now. As we saluted her, her large blue eyes, which seem a reflection of that country of endless azure from which we had come, were fixed on us with a questioning expression, half gentle, half firm. Her Majesty was very simply dressed in a blouse of white woollen material and a black skirt. A trimming suggesting a scapulary ornamented the bodice, giving her somewhat the appearance of a Sister of Mercy. Sister of Mercy! She is indeed that. Behind the trenches that is how they think of her, whose every aspiration tends towards the one pious object of tending the wounded and comforting those who suffer.

We told the Queen how much more proud of being Belgians our travels in distant Africa had made us; how in the course of a complex mission, in a country much influenced by the enemy, we had nevertheless been able to move the masses, merely by the recital of the undeserved miseries of Belgium, and the mention of King Albert's name. We told her that our listeners, from being at times cold and indifferent, would suddenly be roused into outbursts of indignation and horror on hearing of the atrocities committed upon so many harmless civilians, women and children, wounded and priests—of the Boers' anger and their indignant cries of *Schande! Schande!*

We related how, in the course of our meetings,

crowds, often comprising several thousands of Africans, would rise to their feet, stirred by irresistible feelings of enthusiasm, to acclaim Belgium and her King.

The large blue eyes, with their quick gleam, remained firmly fixed upon us, curious and questioning. I saw, as in the mirror of this queenly soul, now compassionate sorrow for the poor victims whose sufferings I recalled, now proud admiration for that husband whose renown rouses the enthusiasm of crowds even in the farthest ends of the world.

Then we tell the Queen of a touching message from Africa. In the course of our journey through the Union some farmers of Oudtshoorn, Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth, ostrich breeders, offered us a collection of choice feathers, begging us to give this humble present to the Queen of the Belgians as a modest token of admiration for one who, by the side of the *Mooie Vorst*—the magnanimous sovereign—is devoting her whole life to the relief of the unfortunate and the suffering.

With the most delightful simplicity the Queen accepts the present; woman-like for a moment she admires the beauty of the great black and white plumes, but immediately the touching idea, the delicate attention of the Boers takes possession of her, the large blue eyes seem to become moist and the kindness of her cordial thanks makes them overflow.

Sweetly the sovereign expresses her gratitude to "the brave hearts," her emotion betraying itself in voice and gesture.

Then reverting quite naturally to the great thought of her life, the Queen spoke at length to us

about the hospitals at the front, the bathing establishments for the soldiers' use, where, within reach of the trenches, a thousand men can have a bath every day ; the arrangements for disinfecting, which ensures our troops getting clean linen. Her Majesty gave us a pressing invitation to visit these institutions which—she forgot to tell us—are due to her initiative and her constant care for the comfort and ease of our dear soldiers.

Presently the door opened—the King appeared.

We had heard that he had aged, and grown thin. This was not so ; just as he looked on August 4, 1914, at the memorable session of Parliament at Brussels, tall, upright, energetic, with a still youthful face, and resolute, thoughtful air, so exactly did we now find him in the sober, everyday uniform of a Belgian General.

The Sovereign whom all the world admires as one of the most noble beings that honour humanity, whose mere name evoked in Africa demonstrations the intense emotion of which I shall never forget, was there before us, holding out his hand in very simple fashion.

We gave the King a detailed account of our mission and its results, regarded from different points of view. His Majesty listened attentively, questioning us methodically, with much understanding and practical common sense. The economic questions, above all our reception at the Bank at Johannesburg, gave occasion for a most interesting exchange of views, and it is evident that amid the din of battle, in spite of the terrible anxieties of the war, the King never ceases to think about the grave problems underlying the industrial and commercial



restoration of Belgium. He spoke of these gravely, and with a characteristic emphasis on each word, as if to make his unshakable faith in the success of New Belgium thoroughly understood. Then taking us by the hand, His Majesty congratulated us on the success of our "very delicate mission" and cordially thanked us, in terms too flattering for me to repeat here, but of which I shall ever retain a lively recollection. The King seemed particularly pleased at the fact that these special overtures of his Government had met with sympathy from the British Government, which had expressed great satisfaction at the entire success of our mission, both from the Belgian point of view and from that of the common interests of the Allies.

We were about to retire, when the Queen, taking the Sovereign affectionately by the hand, said to him : "Now come and look at the beautiful present the Boers have sent me." Handling the delicate, pretty trifles with feminine grace she displayed the large-quilled, straight, fluffy feathers which the King smilingly admired, visibly pleased at this touching homage paid to his Queen. Turning towards us he said, "Above all, gentlemen, do not forget to thank the Boers, and all those in South Africa who feel so much goodwill towards Belgium ; tell them how deeply sensible the King is of these precious tokens of sympathy and generosity."

The audience was at an end. Respectfully we saluted the Queen, and—the sweetest recompense after which we could have aspired—Her Majesty smiled upon us ; nor was there any trace of melancholy in her smile, but rather a frank and happy light shone in her large blue eyes.

Need I say that I have delivered to the best of my ability the message of appreciative gratitude with which His Majesty had charged us, and it is an honour of which I am fully sensible to be able to give it here the full light of publicity.

As I close these pages, some dear friends from over the seas write to me: "Up to this moment the South African Union has paid on behalf of your poor Belgian compatriots the sum of £200,000 whilst thousands of Boers have joined your valiant troops on the Congo, and have gone to wrest her last colony from Germany."

That is the reply to King Albert of those great-souled South African peoples, as kind-hearted and honest as their sun is warm and bright.

THE END



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,  
BRUNSWICK ST., STAMFORD ST., S.E. 1,  
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.





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